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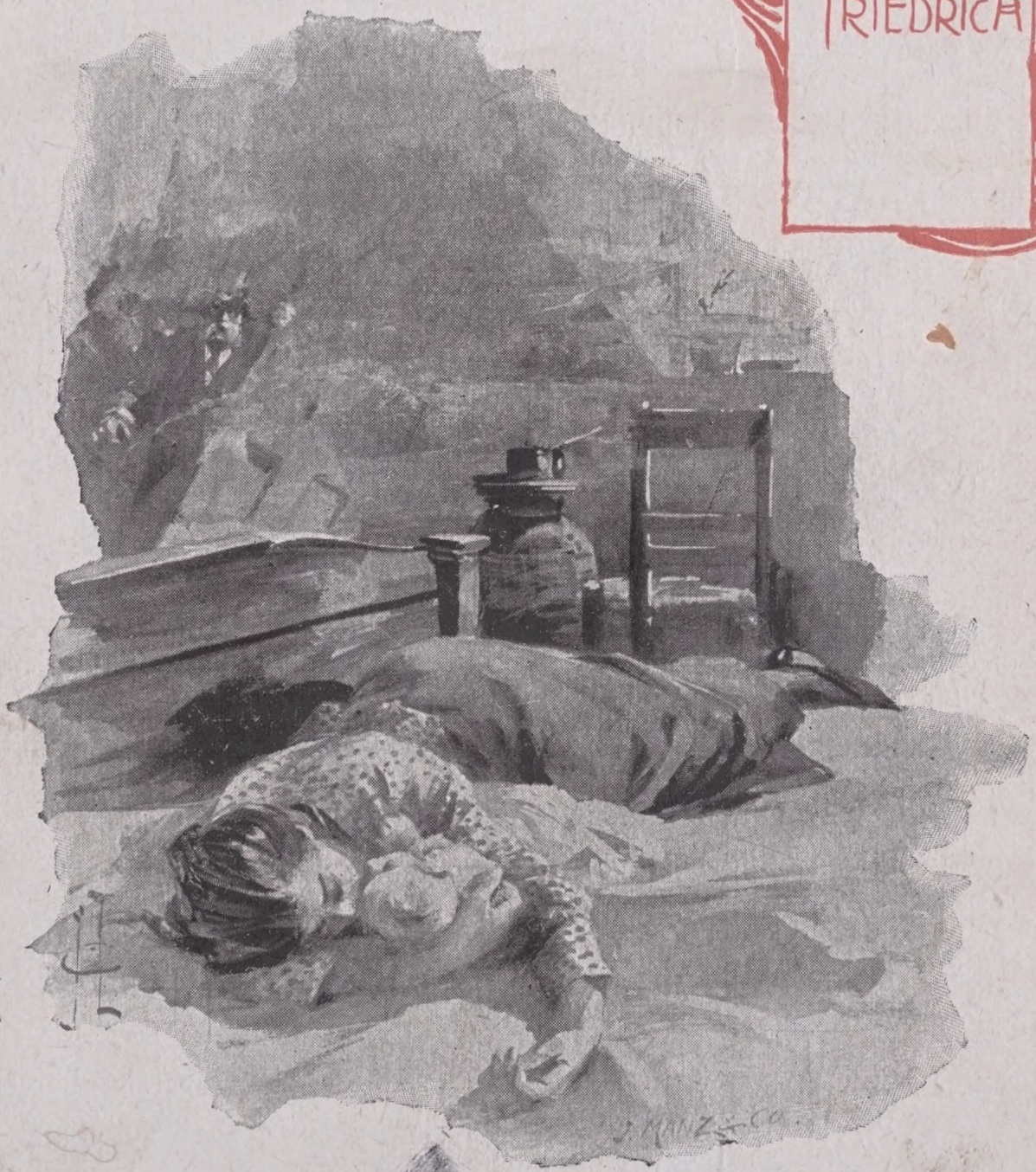
No. 26

THE WORKINGMAN'S WIFE

BY FRIEDRICH FRIEDRICH



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For a few moments he stood there motionlessly; then he approached the unconscious girl, raised her.—Page 95.

THE WORKINGMAN'S WIFE

FROM THE GERMAN OF

FRIEDRICH FRIEDRICH

BY HETTIE E. MILLER

TRANSLATOR OF "MADAME CHRYSANTHEME" ETC

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The Workingman's Wife

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THE WORKINGMAN'S WIFE

I.

Upon the terrace of a charmingly situated and tastefully built country-house two young girls walked slowly arm-in-arm. They were at the most eighteen. Both were beautiful, in fact, it would have perplexed a judge as to which one to award the prize.

Ina, the daughter of the wealthy merchant, Platener, to whom the dwelling belonged, was one of those blondes who at the first glance attracts by the gentleness and purity of feature, in whose eyes beams true womanliness, who resembles a flower which carefully guarded, has never been touched by a breath of wind. Ina had known nothing all her life but happiness and love. She had indeed lost her mother, but she was at the time merely a child, and the wound was speedily healed, for her father lavished his entire wealth of affection upon her, and surrounded her with all the luxury his fortune allowed of.

She was gay and sunny; her happiness was complete since her engagement to Lieutenant Rudolph v. Brankow whom she loved dearly, never dreaming that days of sadness might come.

Her friend and companion, Johanna Mosen, was perhaps less beautiful, but her large, dark eyes gave to her face an intelligent expression; combined with

gentleness there was a calm, firm look upon her face. She had suffered more than one bitter hardship in her life, although no complaint had passed her lips.

Her father had been Ina's father's butler; the two girls had grown up together, and when Mosen died, two years before this story opened, Platener took his daughter's playmate into his family, in order to provide her with a faithful friend. He was aware of the maturity of the girl's character, and Ina could not have found a better friend, a friend who never forgot that all the love she enjoyed was a gift only.

"Where can Rudolph be to-day!" exclaimed Ina, glancing towards the road leading to town. "He promised me to come earlier than usual, and yet the time he generally comes is past."

"He has probably been detained," said Johanna reassuringly.

"He should not allow anything to detain him when he has made me a promise!" replied Ina with the irritation of a child accustomed to have its every wish fulfilled. "He knows that I expect him!"

"Supposing his duties keep him?" said Johanna.

"Johanna, you always excuse him!" returned the fair maiden with a smile, for she could not be vexed with her lover. "Do you know that before Rudolph told me of his love, I was jealous of you, for I fancied he loved you more than he did me."

Johanna turned away her head, a deep blush suffused her cheeks; purposely she dropped her handkerchief that she might relax her hold upon her friend's arm. Ina must not feel the pulsation of her heart at those

words, she must not see the flush which mantled her cheeks. The next moment she had regained her self-possession.

"Why should he have loved me?" she asked calmly. "You are wealthy and lovely, and do you think he does not know that I am a butler's daughter? If he is civil to me it is simply out of courtesy to you, for he can see how attached you are to me! He knows I will not misconstrue his attention!"

"Johanna, you are not poor!" interrupted Ina, almost impatiently. "You are my only friend and my father will do as much for you as he will for me. You know how fond he is of you."

"Yes, I think daily of how much I owe him," said Johanna. "So much the less shall I forget how little claim I have."

"You are a simpleton," cried Ina with a smile. "Are you not pretty and clever? Do you think I do not know how gladly men look into your eyes? Even Rudolph said to me recently, that he never saw more beautiful eyes than yours."

Johanna involuntarily started. Happy Ina did not notice it, for she continued: "I do not see why my father still defers making my engagement public! He likes Rudolph and seems really pleased that I am going to marry him."

"He must be very busy; for days he has talked less than usual."

"I wish he would retire from business and rest, he is rich enough," said the girl

"He is working for you," replied Johanna. "For

he loves you devotedly and and wishes to make your future as bright as possible."

"Therefore he deprives himself of rest. I am satisfied with what he has. I wish for no other home than this, for here I became Rudolph's betrothed. Our house in town is too large and gloomy. There comes Rudolph!" she interrupted herself, hastily dropped her friend's arm and ran through the garden to meet him who was advancing.

For several seconds Johanna watched her. How fortunate was she who could go to meet him and cast herself upon his breast!

She re-entered the house, sought her room, closed the door behind her, cast herself into a chair and covered her face with both hands. She had not been deceived by Brankow's glances. She recalled his every kind word, many of his trifling attentions—yes, he loved her. Had she been wealthy, he would have engaged himself to her; only their poverty—for he was poor too—had formed the gulf between him and her.

She loved him too dearly to be angry with him. By him had the sentiment of love been first awakened in her youthful heart and as something sacred she hid it deep in her breast.

Dared she love her friend's betrothed, her friend to whom she owed so much?

Firmly resolved to conceal her true feelings from both her friend and her lover, she left her room and repaired to the garden. As she paced to and fro alone, her strength for a moment deserted her, and she leaned against a tree-trunk for support.

"Johanna, where are you?" called her friend.

"We have sought you everywhere," added the lieutenant, extending his hand to Johanna. Again his eyes rested passionately upon her, he held her right hand firmly in his. "Your hand trembles," he continued, "are you ill?"

With all her strength the girl strove for composure.

"I was seized with sudden dizziness, therefore I leaned against the tree."

Ina embraced her friend anxiously and tenderly.

"I will escort you into the house!" cried Brankow.

"No, no," replied Johanna quietly, drawing herself up. "It was merely a feeling of momentary weakness, which I have had before. It is over—I am perfectly well again."

She glanced at her friend with a smile, and that smile reassured Ina who had no supicion of its painful cause.

Brankow's eyes were keener, he shook his head.

"Were the dizziness to return?" he asked. "I pray you, lean on my arm."

"Do so, Johanna," implored Ina.

"I feel all right," returned Johanna. "I only require rest."

She kissed her friend's brow and hastened toward the house.

Half an hour later Platener drove home from town in his carriage. Johanna met him and was terrified when she saw the man's pale face.

"Herr Platener, what has happened?" cried she fearfully.

"Nothing—nothing, child!" replied the merchant quickly, seeking to avoid her eyes. "Nothing has happened!" he repeated as if anxious to emphasize his words. "Where is Ina?"

Johanna informed him that she was on the terrace with her lover.

"Leave her there—leave her," continued Platener, with difficulty alighting from the carriage. "Do not tell them that I have come back," he added.

With an effort he drew himself up and turned towards the house; once he was forced to stop and catch his breath.

"You are ill," said Johanna anxiously.

Yes, I am ill," replied Platener, "I feel ill and weak, but do not tell Ina—she must not know it."

"I shall send immediately for a doctor," said Johanna, preparing to enter the house, in order to call a servant and to send him to town.

The merchant seized her hand and detained her.

"Stay here, my child, I want no doctor!" said he. "He cannot help me either, all I require is—rest, rest!"

He passed his hand over his brow.

"I will find it," he then added, "so do not tell Ina that I have returned home; I have come home late many times, it will not arouse her suspicions. By her lover's side she is happy. I do not wish to disturb that happiness. Let her enjoy it—as long as possible."

On reaching his room, he sank exhausted into a chair. Johanna fetched him a glass of wine. When

she returned he sat there still, his face buried in both hands, oblivious of her presence.

Only when she drew near him and said: "Please drink this!" did he remove his hands slowly and she started in affright at the expression upon his face. A few seconds he stared at her fixedly, as if he did not know her, then he hastily swallowed the wine. A deep sigh escaped his breast.

"I have over-estimated my strength and worked too much," said he. "I need rest. Johanna, do you think Ina will be happy with Brankow?"

Surprised at the question, the girl glanced at him in silence.

"Do you think that under all circumstances he will remain true to her," he continued, "that he will never desert her, no matter what turn fortune may take? Ina is good, her heart, however, is too tender for the experiences of life; as soon as trouble comes to her, she will succumb if she has not firm support. Will Brankow possess sufficient strength?"

"Yes, I believe so," replied Johanna. "He is her ideal. What could befall her, for she is surrounded by happiness!" she added.

Half-absently Platener stared into space.

"Do you not know how fickle fortune is?" said he then. "Does she not often take pleasure in plunging into grief those whom she has just shone upon? Have you never heard that upon those whom thousands have envied, fortune has suddenly turned her back, and that they did not possess the strength to struggle with the waves which threatened them? Ha, ha! In

poems such a change of fortune is often depicted, we do not believe it because it seems impossible to us, and yet life is harder and more terrible than poets picture it!"

"You are ill!" cried Johanna anxiously. "Shall I not send for the doctor?"

Platener shook his head in the negative.

"I will try to compose myself," he replied. "The excitement will leave me when I sleep—yes, I shall sleep. No one—no one must disturb me, tell the servants so. Now, rejoin Ina, and let your anxious face betray nothing. Tell her, I sent a messenger from town and informed you that I should return home late. She must sleep when Brankow leaves her. Now, go—go, Johanna, and send me by the servant another bottle of wine—it will do me good."

He held Johanna's hand in his and pressed it firmly, he looked into her eyes—then he gently pushed her toward the door.

She gave the servant his master's order, she heard it obeyed, and Platener lock the door behind him. Anxiously she paused in the ante-room to listen, for she had never seen her friend's father so agitated. Was he more indisposed than he himself believed? But as everything in Platener's room was silent, she crept softly away, for she thought the sleep for which he longed, had come to his aid.

She passed through the garden and joined Ina and Brankow who still sat on the terrace, heedless in their bliss that time was flying. It was evening when Ina inquired for her father; then Johanna informed her that he would return from town late.

"He did not speak of it at noon," said Ina.

"Several hours ago he sent word by a messenger," said Johanna in reply. "I did not tell you lest it might make you uneasy."

Ina glanced gratefully at her friend.

It was rather late when Brankow left for town. Ina accompanied him to the garden gate, and then repaired to her room.

Johanna went too in order to assist her in disrobing, and afterward seated herself at the bedside of the happy girl who for some time talked of her lover's kindness of heart and good qualities without suspecting how heavy her friend's heart was.

At length Johanna leaned over Ina and cut short her words with a kiss, then she rose quickly in order to put on her night-dress.

"I am tired!" said she. "Let us both go to sleep!"

The following morning Johanna rose earlier than usual, for the thought of Ina's father disturbed her. Might he not be seriously ill? His excitement on the preceding evening had been so great. She softly approached his door and listened—all was silent within, he seemed to be still asleep. Reassured she withdrew and bade the servant let no one awaken his master.

An hour later there arrived in apparently the greatest agitation, a man whom she had recently seen very often at Platener's house; it was the broker, Moses Kronberg. She essayed to retire as soon as she saw him, for the short, ugly man, upon whose face was constantly a grinning smile, whose eyes roved about slyly, whose clothes were so untidy,

who showed a dog-like submission towards Platener and even bore insults in silence, had repelled her from the beginning. She could not understand how the wealthy and proud merchant could allow that man to cross his threshold.

Indeed he had, when Ina one day expressed her surprise, replied with a slight shrug of his shoulders: "Child, business brings unpleasantness which can not be avoided." But those words had not lessened her dislike of the man in the least.

The broker followed her and called her. Impatiently she turned, for the man had never dared to do that.

"I wish to speak to Herr Platener," said he, drawing near Johanna.

His entire manner seemed to have changed; he scarcely raised his dirty hat, he stepped out boldly, while formerly he had only advanced with many bows.

"Herr Platener is still asleep," said Johanna in reply, preparing to proceed.

"Herr Platener is still asleep?" repeated Moses Kronberg with a scornful smile. "And I say, he is not asleep."

Indignant at his impertinence, Johanna raised her head. Should she answer the obnoxious fellow?

"Fraulein, Moses Kronberg is too shrewd to allow himself to be deceived," continued the broker. "Were you to say to me, Herr Platener has gone away, I would tell you whither he has gone. Would he sleep when to-day is the *finale* and he has so much to con-

ceal? But if he is still here, then tell me, for I must speak to him. I did not come so early for nothing; I have a bill against him, and if he can yet pay, he must pay me first."

Johanna scarcely understood those words and still they rang in her ears. She recalled his agitation of the evening, she saw the broker's impertinence—her thoughts began to grow confused.

"What has happened?" she exclaimed anxiously.

"What has happened?" repeated the broker, shrugging his shoulders. "Herr Platener wanted to do too much business and miscalculated. He is not the first who has done so and will not be the last. What does it concern me if he pays me what he owes me? He can then disappear, I shall not betray him."

Indescribable anxiety possessed Johanna, she was obliged to lean upon a chair with her right hand in order not to fall, her eyes were fixed upon the man. Was it possible that he spoke the truth? It could not be; the wealthy merchant's large fortune could not have disappeared like a fleeting shadow.

Scarcely knowing what she did, she hastened to Platener's room. The door was still locked, she tapped but received no answer.

"He is sleeping soundly," said Kronberg scornfully. He had followed her, unknown to her. "I will knock!" and he knocked at the door so loudly that it resounded through the house.

"Open! open!" he exclaimed. "Do you still think he is asleep? The bird has flown—he has flown without having paid me—I am an abused man!"

"No, no, he can not have flown!" cried Johanna; she could say no more.

"I will consider myself secured," continued Kronberg. "I will take what I can find, for I am the first of all his creditors who came here. All can not be lost, he has still valuables, furniture, horses!"

Platener's servant and coachman were aroused by the loud knocking.

In amazement they looked at the broker who called to them:

"He has flown—flown! He has deceived us all!"

The servant tried to open the door, after he had knocked again and received no reply; he bore his weight against it, and as Kronberg helped him, the lock gave and the door flew open.

Upon the sofa, lay Platener evidently asleep.

"He is asleep!" cried the servant softly, seeking to hold back those who were pressing forward.

"Would he sleep through knocking such as would awaken the dead," replied the broker, entering the room and approaching the sofa. "He is dead—dead!" cried he. "He has departed this life without paying his creditors."

Johanna rushed into the room; with horror she gazed upon the man lying there pale and motionless. His eyes were still half-open, not a muscle moved, his left hand hung lifelessly by his side. With a loud, despairing cry she sank beside the sofa.

"He is dead!" exclaimed the servant and the coachman simultaneously, seizing their dead master's hand —it was already cold.

The servant then saw that the broker was busy at his master's desk. He had opened the drawer and stretched out his hand towards a small case containing several valuable rings. Rapidly he sprang upon him and held his arm tightly.

"What are you looking for here?" he exclaimed.

Fearfully Moses Kronberg drew back.

"I am looking to see if the deceased has not left me the money he still owes me," he replied. And as the servant involuntarily raised his hand to punish the man who at Platener's death-bed had no other thought than of his losses, he crept servilely from the room and gazed half-shyly, half-longingly through the doors of the ante-room. Then he called out: "He took his life because he could not pay his creditors. To-day he was ruined."

The deceased lay calmly there, no wound was visible. Why had he locked himself in? Had he really taken his life or had he been killed by a strange hand? The servant as well as the coachman could not believe the first, for they could not comprehend that he was no longer rich. He still owned the large business and a house in town, he had still his fine country-house, carriages and horses. The window, through which a murderer might have entered, was open; upon the writing-table lay papers in wild disorder, as if a hand had examined them hastily.

"He was murdered!" cried the servant half-aloud. "The murderer entered there,—here he attacked the sleeper."

Johanna slowly raised herself. The word "mur-

derer" resounded in her ears, and she then remembered the difficult duty which lay before her. She must prepare Ina for the worst, for the girl could not see her father thus; the shock would kill her.

Quickly collecting her strength she left the room in order to hasten to her friend, who perhaps was still asleep, dreaming of happiness and love.

The butler once again approached his master and after convincing himself that he was dead, he locked the door and put the key in his pocket that no one might enter the room.

The coachman had already hastened away and harnessed up the horses in order to go into town to give notice of his master's death.

Moses Kronberg had not yet left the house; he repeatedly tried to approach the butler, thinking he might learn some details of Platener's death which might be of use to him. What cared he that all the servants were white with fear, what cared he for the piercing shrieks which issued from Ina's room.

He merely shrugged his shoulders and said to himself: "She is crying because she has suddenly become poor. Had Platener been shrewder he would have arranged matter for her before he committed suicide; his death will surprise many."

Once more he tried to approach the butler who forcibly put him out of the house.

Johanna sat beside her friend who, completely overcome, lay upon the sofa. She held her right hand in both of hers and gazed anxiously upon Ina's pale face.

As she entered Ina's room, the latter read at once from her countenance that something dreadful had happened. Cautiously, slowly she wished to prepare her friend; she told her that during the night her father had been taken violently ill and only with difficulty could she restrain her from going to him—then Ina heard one of the maids exclaim: "*He is dead, he has been murdered,*" with a shriek she swooned.

Johanna placed her upon a sofa and seated herself beside her. Might not that heavy blow endanger her life? She longed to speak words of comfort to her, but not a sound could she utter.

The unhappy girl did not yet know the worst and she seemed to be heart-broken.

From Platener's and Kronberg's words Johanna concluded that Platener had lost his fortune and in despair had taken his life, because he had not the courage to bear the loss. She did not consider herself, although the loss of her benefactor would bring about a great change in her life. She felt strong enough to fight the battle of life, but what would become of Ina? Could she live without wealth and luxury? Surely, she had one left, she was betrothed, and the man to whom her heart belonged, must become her support and try to replace what she had lost.

"Ina, compose yourself, speak but one word!" besought Johanna, whom her friend's unconscious condition inspired with anxiety.

The girl opened her eyes, half-raised herself and weeping passionately fell on her breast.

In the meantime Platener's carriage had returned from town bringing the lawyer, the doctor and a police officer. The butler led them into the chamber of death, he told them how the room had been opened and how they had found the dead man, he mentioned the names of those present at the time.

"Is everything as you found it?" asked the officer.

"Yes," replied the servant. "Kronberg wanted to examine the desk, but I prevented him, for I suspected him of some dishonest purpose. Then I locked the door and took the key; since then no one has been in."

"Nor you either?" asked the officer.

"Nor I either," assured the servant.

"Were the papers already on the writing-table in this disorder?"

"Yes."

"And was this window open?"

"Yes."

The officer walked to the window and looked out, it was on the ground floor and easy to reach from without; his keen eyes seemed to search for foot-prints. He found nothing.

"Did you hear no noise in the night?" he asked.

"Not the slightest," said the servant.

Where do you sleep?"

"Here, over this room."

"Perhaps you sleep soundly."

"No, I always heard my master call me in the night."

Meanwhile the doctor approached the corpse and examined it.

"All symptoms point to poisoning," said he. The lawyer and officer joined him.

"There are no signs of violence visible," continued the doctor. "His position is such an easy one that at first I thought he had had a stroke of paralysis; such is, however, not the case, various signs point to death by poisoning."

The officer's eye quickly ran around the room; he was looking for some vessel in which the poison had been kept.

"Do you think that he was murdered?" he asked.

"That is scarcely possible, for nothing points to a struggle. The dead man would have called for help."

Assentingly the commissioner nodded his head, he had the same conviction and only wished to hear the fact confirmed by the doctor.

"Is it possible that as he lay upon the sofa and slept the poison was given to him?" he asked still farther.

"I do not consider it possible," was the doctor's reply.

The officer approached the table and took up the wine-glass standing upon it.

"Have you examined this glass?" he asked.

"Not yet," replied the doctor, taking the glass in which the dregs of wine still remained. He smelt it. "This contained no poison, I am sure, for neither the odor nor the color of the wine has been changed in the least," he continued. "Did you hear the rumor about town this morning? Platener is said to have lost his entire fortune on the Exchange, he was to-

day to have paid sums which far exceeded his fortune."

"I have heard so, but I did not wish to allow myself to be influenced by it in the examination," said the commissioner. "My suspicion that no crime but a suicide has been committed is gaining strength. I knew Platener personally and know that he would not be able to bear such a loss. Fortune was too long favorable to him and robbed him of his strength to battle with misfortune. Perhaps there is among is papers something that will explain matters to us."

With the lawyer he walked to the table; both examined the papers. They hoped that Platener had left a letter to his daughter, but they found none. The papers consisted chiefly of business papers, without giving any clew to the condition of his finances. Only one letter begun to Moses Kronberg gave the slightest clew. It ran thus:

"You have plunged me into misfortune, now save me, or I am lost. I followed your advice when I embarked in the speculations on the Bourse. You drove me farther and farther, in order to make good my losses; I followed your advice, for I only discovered later on, that you were thinking simply of your own gains, that you sacrificed me for your advantage in the most shameful manner. You are worse than a robber, for against such a person there is no protection. You deceived and cheated me under the mask of friendship and honor. Now save me, or I will publicly expose you, I will expose you as the cheat you are, I will . . . . . "

Here the letter, dated two days before, was broken

off. Platener seemed to have discovered that it would avail him nothing, still those lines were of great importance.

"I will take this letter with me," said the lawyer, as he put the writing in his pocket-book. "Did you not say that Kronberg was here this morning?" he asked the butler.

"He came very early and said he had a bill against my unfortunate master."

"And that he wished to settle in order to get ahead of the other creditors," remarked the commissioner. "I know that man and his ways. Platener was right, he is worse than a robber, for he plunders those who confide in him, and would not even spare his friends, had he any. The worst is that he does everything under the cloak of righteousness and is shrewd enough not to break the law, although his deed be the most shameful!"

"Perhaps there may be a clause in the law which would punish him!" said the lawyer.

The officer shrugged his shoulders doubtfully. "I scarcely think so," he replied. "These people study the law very carefully, not in order to keep it, but to evade it! Does your master's daughter know of what has happened?" he said to the servant.

"She only knows that he is dead."

"Has she seen him?"

"No."

"Then do not tell her that he took his own life. It is a heavy blow which has come upon her without any preparation, in the midst of happiness."

"None of us suspected that Herr Platener had lost heavily," said the servant. "We all considered him very wealthy, for up to the last moment we were not forced to practice economy."

The corpse was borne into another chamber, and the room in which Herr Platener died, locked. The lawyer took the key.

The officer examined the garden and not far from Platener's bed-room window he found a flask which had contained the poison that destroyed the merchants life. It seemed to have been his object to cast suspicion from himself; the means he had taken to do so, betrayed plainly the excitement of his mood; he seemed not to have any longer the strength to consider calmly. Surely it must have cost him a pang to leave the life which had offered him so many joys.

II.

The news of Platener's suicide reached town with marvelous rapidity and called forth the greatest surprise. Many knew that he had speculated on the Bourse and sustained heavy losses; but no one suspected that they were as heavy as they really were.

The rumor was, therefore, circulated that Platener had cheated many poor families who had entrusted their money to him, considering it safe. It was untrue, but nevertheless it was credited and hatred of the deceased became hourly more intense. When Platener's coachman drove into town at noon to fetch a doctor for Ina who was overcome by grief, the anger of the mob increased as soon as the vehicle was recognized.

Several urchins flung stones at the horses. That was the signal for a general attack. The horses grew restless, in vain did the coachman seek to control them, his strength was insufficient. The spirited animals rushed into the midst of the throng; they tramped upon a boy over whom the carriage passed.

An angry shout was heard.

"He has run over a boy, he drove the horse over him purposely! Drag the wretch from his box and strike him down!" cried the infuriated mob. "He is no better than his master—like master, like man!

"He has run over a boy, he drove the horses purposely over him!" cried the infuriated mob.—Page 25.

Strike him down! Avenge the boy whom he ran over!"

Several sprang upon the carriage in order to seize the terrified coachman, when a couple of officers came to his aid and took him, for safety, to the nearest station.

The anger of the mob was thereby increased; at first, it was undecided what to do. Then a loud voice cried from its midst: "Come, to the deceiver's house, we will raze it to the ground and avenge those who have been cheated."

The words rang out like a command, a signal for the fight. Hooting and yelling the mob passed on to Platener's house.

On arriving there, it found policemen at the door. Threats were uttered, but a few of the noisiest were arrested and the rest turned away.

Moses Kronberg was seen in the midst of the excited throng. He was seen by the commissioner inciting the angry people.

The commissioner caused his arrest and a short time thereafter had him brought to his office in order to examine him. Outwardly humble, but secretly defiant Kronberg entered. His eyes seemd to say: "Who can accuse me? What I have done is not against the law; I know the law and know how it can be evaded without involving oneself."

"Sir," said he, as he stood there with bowed head. "I have been arrested by the police and know not why. I am a peaceable man, who has never done anyone harm. I have never broken the law. I go quietly

about my work and am satisfied if I can earn a living in an honest way. I ask no more. My friends always say of me: 'Moses Kronberg could do well were he not so conscientious;' but my conscience is more valuable to me than business."

Impatiently the commissioner, who knew the man's character, interrupted him:

"In what relations did you stand to Platener?" he asked.

Kronberg looked at him in surprise, as if he did not understand the question.

"In what relations?" he repeated. "Herr Platener was a wealthy man and I am a poor broker who is thankful for employment. Would the rich, proud man, who rode in his own carriage, have had any relations with poor Kronberg?"

"You had business relations with him," interpolated the commissioner. "He speculated through you on 'Change.'"

"Sir, I should have been happy had the wealthy merchant had business relations with me, had I had an account in his book. Herr Platener sent for me one day, and did me the honor to summon me into his private room. 'Kronberg,' said he to me, 'I know you to be an honest man, therefore I wish to ask your advice. Tell me frankly, do you consider these stocks good or bad; as everyone is speculating and making money, I wish to do so too.' And I gave him my opinion, as well as I could."

"Did Platener never commission you to buy or sell for him on 'Change?'"

"Certainly, because he could not go there daily himself. I only did as he bade me."

"Did he pay you for it?"

"He was a generous man, who asked no service for nothing."

"How long were you connected with him in this way?"

"It may have been a year and a half; I am not positive as to that."

"How much did you earn through Platener in that time?"

The question did not seem entirely welcome to the man. He hesitated a moment and his eyes roved around the room as if he hoped to find some means of exit.

"How do I know?" he replied with a sly smile. "What he paid me, I used to live on."

"Did you not write it down?"

"Why should I?"

"You must surely know how much you received?" persisted the commissioner.

"I do not know," replied Kronberg.

"Well, I hope we shall be able to find out from Platener's books."

"Do you know if they are correct?" remarked the broker. "Might he not have written down that he gave me so-and-so much, and have then used the money for something else?"

"How should you form such a suspicion?" interrupted the commissioner. "You accuse him of falsifying; have you any proof of it?"

In terror Kronberg recoiled; he regretted the words he had uttered.

"I accuse no one—I have no suspicion!" he replied. "You must have misunderstood my words—would I accuse Herr Platener? I always liked him. I only mentioned a possibility, and a possibility is no accusation."

"Platener lost large sums, yes, his entire fortune through you."

"Through me?" cried Kronberg.

"He followed your advice, and you urged him on in the dangerous venture."

"He did not always follow my advice; wealthy and proud gentlemen think they know more than any one else. I often warned him, he did not heed me! And if he had taken my advice, was he forced to do so? Was he not a man who knew what he was about? He is now dead, and cannot say how honest and upright I always was with him. He would say so, for it is true."

"He maintains just the opposite," said the commissioner.

"With regard to whom? He is dead!" cried the broker.

"He left it in writing!"

Moses half-closed his eyes as if by that means he would the better conceal what was taking place within him.

"You are silent."

"How can I answer, if I do not know what he wrote? And if I say he wrote an untruth, would you not have to believe me as much as him?"

"That the attorney-general will inquire into," replied the commissioner. "Platener accuses you of having brought about his whole misfortune. How far that is true, the examination will prove. What were you doing in the mob to-day, when Platener's coachman was attacked?"

"Nothing. I was accidentally passing through the street, when the people streamed in from all sides. I could go neither forward nor backward."

"I require you to speak the truth. I myself saw you urge on the men, you seemed to be pointing to something."

"I was simply trying to make my way through the crowd."

"That was not your purpose. Did you not say that Platener lost everything on the Bourse?"

Kronberg glanced at the commissioner, half-shrewdly, half-fearfully.

How did he know the words he had spoken?

"And if I said so, was it not true?" he replied.

"You said too that the horses cost more than two thousand dollars."

"They did, I know."

"But you knew that by those words you aggravated still more the already embittered mob."

"I aggravated no one. I wanted to calm the people; I mentioned the cost of the horses, that they might spare the valuable animals."

The commissioner saw that no frank confession could be obtained from the man who so skilfully evaded the truth; only by proofs could his guilt be

established. He summoned an official to lead away the man.

"Take the prisoner away," he commanded briefly.

"Whither?" asked Kronberg, who had reckoned upon his release.

"To jail."

"What, to jail? I am innocent, sir, as sure as I stand before you! I am a poor, abused man, will you plunge me into despair? Let me go, let me go free! Great God, Moses Kronberg in jail! And wherefore? Because he is innocent, because he honorably upheld Platener, because he tried to calm the excited mob! Is that justice? I protest against the force which is used . . . . I will appeal, I will. . . ."

The commissioner signed to the official who seized Moses by the arm and led him out of the door. Even when it was closed upon him, the broker's loud lamentations could be heard.

"I am an abused man! They use force to me, although I am innocent! Is that justice?"

At the same hour, at twilight, Johanna sat with Ina in her room.

The unhappy girl as yet did not know of her father's true fate. As yet she did not know that he had committed suicide, that she was poor, that her father's creditors had been to the house and seized the furniture, carriages, horses, everything that he had left.

To Ina's grief was added another. That morning she had looked for her lover.

"I am an abused man! They use force to me, although I am innocent! Is that justice?"—Page 32.

But the morning sped by and he did not come. In the afternoon Ina had sent a messenger to him and he had sent her word that he would come as soon as possible. It was already night, and Ina still awaited him in vain.

She was in a state of feverish excitement.

As yet no complaint had escaped her lips.

"He does not come!" she exclaimed finally with an accent of unspeakable woe, bursting into tears. She cast herself upon her friend's breast.

"He will come," thus Johanna sought to soothe her, "he must have been detained."

"Should he allow anything to detain him when he knows with what longing I await him?" continued Ina. "He is now the only one to whom I can cling! Should he not have hastened to me the moment he heard of my father's death?"

"Ina, he may come any minute, and then he will tell you what kept him," said Johanna. "Do not accuse him unheard."

But Rudolph von Brankow did not come, nor did he send any message. The following day dawned and closed—he came not.

Hope began to desert Ina; in despair she wondered why he did not come. Had he ceased to love her? That could not be!

More than once she started up to go to him, to learn from his own lips why he did not come, to read in his eyes that her fears had been in vain. Johanna detained her forcibly, although her strength would have been insufficient for such a step.

Her condition was indeed serious; the doctor whom they summoned, prescribed rest and care. How could she rest when her heart was racked by sorrow?

Johanna likewise could find no reason for Brankow's absence. Could she still bid Ina hope? When the latter looked at her in despair, she only seized her hand and pressed it to her lips.

The second night passed and the girl obtained no repose. Only when morning broke, did exhaustion conquer pain, and sleep came to her relief.

Softly Johanna left her friend's side.

She bade the maid remain with Ina.

"If she awakes and asks for me, tell her I am asleep," she added, "that I was tired out. She will perhaps wish to rise and leave her room; do all you can to detain her until I have returned."

The maid promised to carry out her orders to the letter. She then left the house and proceeded towards town. Her knees trembled, for she had a difficult task before her, and she set about it without hope; her firm will and the refreshing coolness of the morning alone sustained her.

She was going to Brankow to hear from his lips why he did not come to his betrothed. She must know if his love for Ina had died out, for the condition in which the unfortunate girl was, could not last longer.

She still doubted that Brankow had purposely deserted Ina; she hoped he would give her reasons which would justify him; she hoped so for her friend's sake, for her own, for it was painful to her to think

that she could not respect the man for whom her heart beat.

What she was doing, was not for herself but for Ina whom she loved so dearly.

Slowly she ascended the stairs; her heart beat so rapidly, so loudly, that she was forced to stand still more than once, in order to gain strength and composure.

Her hand trembled when she rang the bell which led to the landlord's apartments where Brankow lodged.

A woman opened the door.

"Is Lieutenant von Brankow at home?" inquired Johanna; she was barely able to ask the question.

The woman glanced keenly at her; it struck her as strange that a young girl should call upon the lieutenant so early.

"Certainly; do you wish to speak to him?" she asked at length.

"Yes."

"Very well; there is his door; go in; he has risen, for his servant fetched his coffee half an hour ago."

"No, no!" interrupted Johanna. "I can not go to him, will you allow me to sit in your room a few minutes?"

Again the woman looked at her curiously.

"Pray, come in," said she then, preceding her.

They passed Brankow's room.

Johanna entered the woman's apartments and sank into a chair.

"Give me a few moments," she besought.

She passed her hand over her brow; her strength was failing her, but she must accomplish her object.

"What do you want with the lieutenant?" asked the woman curiously.

"I must speak to him, but not for myself, for another."

"And you will not go to his room?"

"No, I can not!—Can I not speak to him here?" asked Johanna. "You do not know what a favor you would confer! I will not intrude long!"

"Shall I call the lieutenant?"

"Yes—no,—not yet; give me another moment in which to compose myself," replied Johanna, pressing her hand to her heart. "Now call him," said she.

"Shall I not tell him your name?" asked the woman.

Johanna shook her head in the negative.

The woman left the room. Johanna buried her face in both hands and when she slowly removed them, she seemed composed though her cheeks were strikingly pale.

Brankow entered the room and paused in amazement at the door. Then he collected himself and hastily advanced to Johanna who had arisen, and attempted to take her hand.

Involuntarily Johanna recoiled, as she said:

"I came hither for Ina. She does not know of the step I have taken, but in her name I ask you why you have not come to support her in her trouble?"

The blood rushed from the lieutenant's face, he evidently strove for composure.

"I hoped Ina would understand my absence," he replied, "I hoped she would understand that—I did not come in order to spare her a painful explanation."

"A painful explanation?" repeated Johanna. "Indeed I do not understand you. What would you spare her?"

Brankow could not conceal his embarrassment.

"The whole town is talking of the fact that Ina's father committed suicide, that he lost his entire fortune on the Bourse and that what is left is not enough to pay his creditors," he said. "I heard it from men whose word I can not doubt. Therefore I am unfortunately compelled to break our engagement."

"You are compelled—" repeated Johanna.

"My honor—my rank as an officer," stammered Brankow. "Ina's father is a suicide."

"Can Ina help that?" cried Johanna. "So that was the explanation you wished to spare her? Your love for her is dead—now that her father is dead! She surely never dreamed of this, for she believed in your assurances of love."

"Johanna, do not judge me too harshly!" implored Brankow. "I cannot accept such a fate, my life would be blasted. I have no fortune. In engaging myself to Ina, whom I esteem highly, I did not choose from my heart; had I been free to make my choice, I would not have selected Ina. Have you never divined that my heart was yours?"

Johanna drew back indignantly.

"Herr von Brankow, I thought your sense of honor would prevent you from insulting me!" she cried.

"Is it an insult to confess that my heart belongs to you?" asked the lieutenant.

"It is an insult since you have so shamefully deserted my friend! I shall endeavor to comfort her by telling her she gave her heart to one unworthy of it!"

"Johanna, do not be so hard on me!" said Brankow.

"Do not call me by my given name; you have no right to do so. I have nothing more to say to you."

Johanna turned and walked to the window.

For a moment Brankow looked after her; he felt impelled to approach her and take her hand, but he dared not. He left the room.

When Johanna heard the door close upon him, her strength forsook her. She sank into a chair and buried her face in her hands. How could she tell her friend that she was given up and deserted?

The woman, who in the adjoining room had heard every word, entered and sought to comfort her.

"All men are alike," said she. "What do they care if they break an innocent heart? I know that from experience and consider every girl lucky who makes the discovery before she is bound to a husband. Men do not know what love is, selfishness alone guides them."

Johanna rose, thanked the woman for her kindness and look leave of her.

She left the town. Wearily and disheartened she walked along the road which she and Ina had so often traversed. At length she reached home. Ina was still asleep. She entered her friend's room; at a sign from her the maid withdrew.

How calmly the sleeping girl lay there. Sleep had for a short time banished all sorrow, her cheeks were faintly tinged with pink. How soon that would disappear when she learned that the last one to whom she was attached was lost.

Silently she sank beside the bed.

Ina opened her eyes and looked with a smile at her friend; her dreams still seemed to hover before her and to keep at a distance the remembrance of reality.

"Is Rudolph here? "she cried. "He must he here! I dreamed of him and he was so kind and good."

Johanna turned away her head; it was painful to her to destroy that dream.

"Johanna, what ails you?" asked Ina. "Is he not here?"

Johanna shook her head.

"And has he not sent word that he will come today?" continued Ina. "He must come, for I can no longer stand this yearning for him. How can he be so cruel?"

Johanna clasped her friend in her arms—she could deceive her no longer.

"Ina, forget him! He is not worthy of you!" she exclaimed.

Ina gazed into her friend's eyes.

"Not worthy of me?" she repeated. "Can you say that of Rudolph?"

"Forget him, forget him!" cried Johanna. "He is lost to you, he will never come again, he is not worthy of you."

Still Ina did not understand.

"He will never come again? What has happened? Johanna, I beseech you, speak! Have you seen him?"

"Yes, I have! I went to his house this morning to obtain an explanation—I did it for your sake!"

"And he—and he?" interrupted Ina, breathlessly.

"He wishes to be released, because your father—is dead!"

Fixedly the unhappy girl stared at her friend. Could she trust her ears? Was what she had heard possible? Johanna was terrified.

"Ina, forget him, he is not worth loving!"

Ina did not reply, no word of complaint passed her lips. With a deep sigh she sank back upon her pillow. In vain did Johanna seek to console her, she did not answer, she seemed not to hear her words, fixedly she stared before her. The intensity of her grief seemed to have affected her mind.

An hour later an aunt came to take her from the house of mourning to live with her in some distant town. Ina was not in the least surprised; silently, with a nod of her head, she consented to go with her.

She did not even ask to see her father, nor did she express a wish that her friend accompany her.

When the carriage which was to take her to the station stood at the door and Johanna cast herself sobbing upon her breast, she said calmly, as if parting from a stranger:

"Farewell, Johanna."

Not a tear entered her eye her voice did not trem-

ble, her heart seemed to know no feeling of friendship. So she drove away.

An hour afterward Johanna too left the house in which she had spent so many happy days, in order to return to her mother who lived in town. She was not able to attend her benefactor's funeral.

What hopes had once been hers, and now she took nothing with her, but the things which were hers—not even hope.

III.

Platener was buried without any display; not one of all those who had once been his friends and gladly enjoyed his hospitality, attended him to the grave. Not one word of compassion was heard for the suicide.

Both of his houses were closed, for all within them belonged to his creditors.

Kronberg had been released eight days after his arrest; although his conduct had been blamable, the attorney-general had not been able to find sufficient proofs to get a case against him. The sly broker had not broken the law; that his conduct from a moral standpoint condemned him, what cared he?

Johanna had returned to her mother's house. The sickly woman had, after her husband's death, lived on money given her by Platener for her support; so his sudden demise was doubly hard for her. Anxiously and hopelessly she looked towards the future and Johanna could not succeed in comforting her. In vain did she assure her that she would do all in her power to provide for her.

In despair her mother shook her head.

"Child," she said, "do you not know how little is paid for woman's work? Your fingers will become lame before you earn enough to support us. Your

strength will not hold out. Shall your youth be rendered miserable in the struggle for our daily bread?"

"My strength will hold out," she replied, for she was certain that she had a firm will, and by means of that she hoped to surmount all difficulties.

From early morning until late at night she sat in her mother's small, low mansard room and sewed. She had obtained work for one firm; how much she would receive she had not dared to ask.

Her mother often besought her to take more rest.

She would reply: "*I am not tired*," and yet at night she felt that she was undertaking too much and wondered if she could stand it. Still she told herself she was happy compared with her friend.

She had written to Ina, but as yet had received no reply, she scarcely expected one, for she knew the great sorrow which the unhappy girl had to overcome.

On a dark, gloomy day Johanna was sitting alone in the room with her mother who had been bemoaning their lot. As the latter thought of the future she wept, and Johanna could scarcely find word with which to comfort her. A knock was heard at the door.

The woman arose in order to open it, for visitors were rare in the small room, when the door opened and Kronberg's ugly, black-haired head was thrust in.

"May I come in?" he asked, entering without awaiting permission.

Curiously, keenly his eyes roved about the cham-

ber; the simplicity, the poverty of the same could not escape him. Involuntarily a slight flush suffused Johanna's cheeks; she was not ashamed of her poverty, still it pained her that the man who had seen her under quite different circumstances, should see her thus.

"I have been seeking you, Fraulein," he turned to Johanna, "for days I have been seeking and could not find you. Finally I succeeded, and I did not hesitate to call on you."

Johanna's mother, who did not know him, stepped forward and looked at him inquiringly.

"I am the broker, Moses Kronberg," said he, introducing himself. "I had the pleasure of making your daughter's acquaintance at the home of Herr Platener! Platener is dead, I said to myself, you must find the fraulein, perhaps you can be of use to her, for Platener will not have provided for her, he left this life so suddenly. Kronberg has often assisted his friends."

Over the woman's face flitted an expression of pleasure; she did not know the broker, and he seemed like a rescuer in time of need.

"Thank you, I require no help," said Johanna as she again took up her sewing and looked at it in order to escape the man's eyes. Could he not read in her face that she had not spoken the truth?

Her mother glanced at her half in surprise, half in impatience, for she could not understand her manner.

"Johanna!" cried she reproachfully.

"Fraulein, one should not reject a hand which is

thrust out to help one!" said Kronberg "Fortune is fickle; to-day she shines upon some one with gifts, to-morrow, she turns her back upon them, then a friend is invaluable and Kronberg means well. Would I have sought you out and have offered you my help if I were not sympathetic? Do not misunderstand me; I did not come to transact business, I shall not demand back what I give you; I only wish to lighten your burden. Living is dear, you are used to luxury; why not live better if you can?"

"I am not dissatisfied with my lot," said Johanna in reply.

"You have a grand mind, you yield to the inevitable; but I can see by your pale cheeks how difficult it is for you. Let Kronberg help you!"

"I thank you!" said Johanna shortly and concisely.

The broker shrugged his shoulders and looked at her mother inquiringly. That curt refusal vexed him; forcibly he restrained his anger.

"On what shall you live?" he asked in his impertinent manner. "Platener can give you nothing more, for he is dead, and if he were not dead, he could give you nothing, for he would be a beggar!"

Johanna did not show her vexation at those words.

"You see I am working," she replied.

"What do you mean by *working*. Do you think you could earn enough to live on by sewing? Your hands are not used to work; your pretty fingers will become lame if Kronberg does not make it easier for you."

"I must once more reject your help!" exclaimed

Johanna, impatiently, as she proudly raised her head, "I do not need your aid!"

"Johanna!" again cried her morther reproachfully.

"Never mind, madame!" The broker turned to the mother. "She will yet need my assistance! I am not sensitive and will come again in a little while for I know that want will have rendered her milder."

"You may save yourself the trouble," said Johanna.

"I will come," replied Kronberg who was not to be daunted. "I am experienced and can see further than you. Moses Kronberg has seldom been mistaken,—I will come again!"

With a bow he left the room, opening the door just a little way and slipping through.

Johanna's mother gazed angrily at her daughter.

"I can not comprehend why you refuse the hand of the man who so kindly offers us his help," said she, as she heard Kronberg descending the steps. "Shall we not need help? You do not know how much is required; want will knock at the door only too soon."

Johanna slowly let her work fall into her lap.

"Mother, you do not know the man, or you would not speak thus," she said calmly. "He has never known any interest but his own; he would quietly allow us to starve if he had not some object in all this."

"What object could he have?" asked the woman.

"I do not know. He surely does not pity us. I loathe him and shall never accept the slightest thing from him nor do I want him ever to come here again!"

The proprietor took her work and examined each piece closely.—Page 49.

"Child, you are too severe," said her mother. "I do not—doubt his good will, he is right too, your strength will not hold out. You can not earn enough to live upon, for, alas, I can not work."

"I will earn it!" assured Johanna. "I shall finish this work to-day. I will take it away at once and get my pay. It is the first I have earned and it will spur me on!"

She resumed her work as she spoke.

Her mother sank into a chair opposite her and looked at her sadly. Already the girl's cheeks were pale, would they not become paler?

Towards evening Johanna finished her work and with a feeling of delight she rolled it up to take it to the shop and to get her pay.

With throbbing heart she entered the shop where she had obtained employment.

The proprietor took her work and examined each piece closely. She had done it very carefully and was disappointed that he did not express his satisfaction.

He calculated the renumeration on a slip of paper, and then as if she were a beggar, he flung upon the counter two dollars and a few groschens for the work which had taken her two weeks and upon which she had worked from early morning until late at night.

Almost terrified she drew back; the hand with which she was about to receive the money, fell to her side.

"Well?" asked the merchant who noticed her hesitation.

"You must have made a mistake," said she with difficulty.

"I never make a mistake!" replied the merchant curtly. "This is the sum due you."

"I spent more than fourteen days on the work and took the greatest pains with it," said Johanna.

"That is not my business!" was the rude reply. "I have given you what the work is worth and what I always pay for it. Moreover, you must not forget that I did not urge the work upon you, rather you came to me and begged me for it. If you are not satisfied, you are free to go elsewhere, but I doubt if you will receive more."

He turned and entered an adjoining room.

Johanna took the paltry sum and hurried from the shop.

That was the pay for her long and laborious work!

The thought of the future lay heavy on her breast. Was it possible that they could live on such trifling pay?

When they entered her mother's little room, she sank upon a chair and sobbed violently.

"Child, what has happened?" asked Frau Mosen approaching her.

Johanna could not reply; when her mother repeated the question she gave her the money and cried "This —this is all I received."

With a mournful expression the mother looked at her disappointed child.

"I knew you would not get any more," said she. "I had not the heart to tell you, because I did not want to discourage you."

"Mother, I can not work for such wages, for we would starve, were we ever so economical!" she exclaimed. "I must find some way to manage. I will spare no trouble, I will work day and night. I ask no more than to live!"

The mother maintained silence and gazed sadly before her.

"Is there no way?" asked Johanna once more.

"Child, you will find work which will pay better," replied the woman against her convictions. "And was not a man here who voluntarily offered us his help?"

"Mother, you know that I will never accept anything from him; I would rather starve!" cried Johanna. "I do not despair of succeeding by my own exertions."

Her mother made no reply; she retired early, while Johanna remained seated at the window.

The following morning she left the house in order to seek work, as she told her mother. But another object took her out. In her pocket she had several presents given her on birthdays and Christmas by Ina and her father,—she wanted to sell them.

With trembling hands she gave up the trinkets which were so dear to her. She received enough from their sale to keep the wolf from the door for a time while she sought other work.

When she returned home, she handed her mother the money.

"Where did you get this"? asked her mother in astonishment.

Johanna told her that she had sold her jewelry.

Tears filled the mother's eyes.

"Child why did you do that?"

"Do you think, mother," replied Johanna calmly, "that I could wear the ring and bracelets now? The memories connected with them are too painful.

"Child, do not despair," said the woman, "happier and better days will come for you, in which you can again buy what you have given up to-day; your heart is so true and good, that I should doubt the Almighty's justice, did not your life become brighter."

Johanna turned away in silence.

IV.

Johanna's efforts to obtain work which would pay better were in vain.

She was determined to leave no stone unturned until she earned sufficient to assure hers and her mother's maintenance.

An acquaintance advised her to turn to the principal of a Union for the Improvement of Women, and she had done so, hoping in that way to find help.

She told her mother of her hopes in that direction. The latter could not conceal her fears of another disappointment. But she did not say anything to discourage her daughter.

Johanna repaired to the principal of the union, who on hearing her story gave her a dissertation on the rights of women, promised to aid her and invited her to spend that evening at the union, in order that she might be inspired by their great work.

Johanna for a moment looked in confusion at the woman. She had come thither in the hope of finding employemnt and instead she had received several cards to an "evening" at the union. She then left the room to return home. The stately woman had promised her aid, and her face was too honest for her to break her word.

Her mother glanced inquiringly at her as she entered.

"The principal received me very kindly and promised to help me," said Johanna.

When evening came, she kissed her mother and hastily left the room.

The hall in which the "evening" was held, was already filled when she entered. Scarcely had the principal espied her, than she hastened to her and led her to a chair.

She listened to a speech on the freeing of women from bondage delivered by the principal, Auguste Schulze; to the recitation of several poems by a young girl who had little or no talent; to another speech, and at length the "evening" closed. Then the principal cordially informed Johanna that she looked upon her as a member of their union and hoped she would attend their meetings regularly.

Johanna promised without realizing what she said. She had only one thought: to obtain work for the support of her mother and herself. Timidly she expressed that wish to the stately lady whose face at once assumed an impatient expression as she informed her that she must follow her aim and assume no other cares.

With bowed head Johanna stood there. She had sought help and all that was given her was high sounding words. Tears rushed to her eyes.

"I do not know what to do if I do not find work," said she.

"Do not lose courage," continued Auguste. "We women must learn to act independently. Go tomorrow towards noon to the secretary of our union,

to Frau Veilchen Lacherlich. I will talk with her this evening, and I am sure she will do all she can to help you."

Johanna returned home. It was late and she walked hastily. Softly she entered her mother's room and laid down. The latter asked her no questions although she was awake; nor the next morning did she ask anything, for she read upon her daughter's pale cheeks more than she cared to know.

Johanna herself told her that the principal of the union had referred her to Frau Veilchen Lacherlich.

"Shall you go to her?" asked her mother.

"Yes, although I have little confidence in her. She seems to be vain and to think only of herself."

A few hours later Johanna repaired to Frau Veilchen Lacherlich's house.

A servant led the nervous girl into her mistress' room, where she waited some time, meanwhile glancing around the room so luxuriously furnished and yet so untidy!

How charming it would have been had it been in order! How would she have guarded such things! Upon a table lay costly books and among them in wild disorder hair-pins, trinkets and the remains of a roll.

After some time Frau Veilchen Lacherlich finally entered and Johanna advanced shyly to meet the untidy, out-at-elbows woman who entered.

"I applied to Fraulein Schulze for work," said Johanna.

"Fraulein Schulze told me about it," said Frau

Lacherlich, assuming a cold, supercilious expression. "I must frankly confess that we do not take an interest in such common matters, for they would take our thoughts from higher things; yet I will do something for you. Can you sew and embroider?"

"Yes."

"Well, here are a dozen handkerchiefs; hemstitch them and embroider *V. L.* upon them. I wish to call your attention to the fact that I am painfully neat and particular, I therefore expect you to be very careful with them. Lord, at least ten girls have asked me for these handkerchiefs; I show great confidence in giving you the work. I call your attention to the fact once more that I am so particular that it is impossible for me to use a handkerchief which has not been carefully embroidered. I am quite exhausted—now go!"

She sank into a chair and signed to Johanna to leave the room.

With trembling hands Johanna gathered together the handkerchiefs. She would have preferred to refuse them and yet she dared not.

In silence she bowed and left the room.

With difficulty she restrained the tears which filled her eyes, wherefore she wept, she could not tell.

As she ascended the stairs to her mother's apartments, she met the broker, Kronberg. Hastily he took the hat from his head and his features were distorted with a friendly grin.

"How happy I am to meet you, pretty Fraulein," said he, half aloud. "I was with your mother to ask

Hastily he took the hat from his head and his features were distorted by a friendly grin.—Page 56.

if you yet had need of Kronberg. A fine woman, your mother! She opened her heart to me and told me how hard you have to work. Work is nothing for you! Fraulein, I tell you is it nothing? I know you are not accustomed to work, and that you could lead a happier life, if you wished to!"

"I am not complaining about my lot," replied Johanna.

"Because you are too clever and kind-hearted," continued the broker, "because you do not wish to show people how difficult the change in your life is to bear. And you are right; why need others learn this? Only Kronberg knows it, but you need not mind me, I mean well and will never desert you."

"I do not require your help," replied Johanna impatiently, attempting to ascend the stairs.

The broker barred the way.

"Remain," said he, "I was at the other end of town and came all this distance to see you. Why are you so harsh with me? Is it wrong of me to seek you out in order to offer you my help? All who know me, say: 'Kronberg is good, for he has a tender heart, he can not see anybody suffer.'"

"I do not suffer," returned Johanna. "Now step aside, I want to go to my mother."

"May I come again?" asked the broker, drawing back to allow her to pass.

"You may spare yourself the trouble," said Johanna, hastily ascending the stairs.

"Lord, how inflexible you are!" called out Kronberg. "Well, I will come if I am in the neighborhood—I will come!"

Johanna did not hear those words, for she had entered her mother's room. With a half-inquiring, half-anxious glance the latter looked at her.

"What was the broker doing here?" asked Johanna. "I just met him on the stairs."

"He came to again offer us his help."

"After I so decidedly told him we should not need it?" replied Johanna impatiently.

"You are unjust to him," said the woman. "He was so kind and really wants to help us."

"I fear his *kindness* more than anything," said Johanna. "He was always servile towards Herr Platener, yet he plunged him into misfortune, and I am convinced he does not feel in the least remorseful."

"No, child, he is not so bad as that. He may look out for his own interests, but I do not believe he would harm anyone else."

Johanna perceived a roll of money lying upon the table.

"What is that?" she asked.

"Kronberg gave it to me."

Almost terrified Johanna looked at her mother.

"For what? For what?" she asked hastily. "Mother, you took money from him?"

"I did not want it," replied the woman. "I refused it when he offered it to me that you might not have to work so hard, then he laid it on the table and left the room."

"I shall return it to him," said Johanna, taking the money. "I want nothing from that man."

"He gave me the money!" cried her mother, who could not understand her daughter's manner. "Will you not let me lighten our condition with it? You do not know life, therefore do you look into the future with so much hope. I am not worried for myself, but for you. My life is almost ended, but you have yours before you and I do not wish to see it made miserable before you have begun to enjoy it."

Tears were in her eyes and her voice trembled.

Johanna was moved; she felt that her mother was not wrong.

"Mother, I will care for you, you shall not want!" she exclaimed, throwing her arm about her neck. "I am sure I shall succeed. But one favor accord me: do not let us accept the slightest benefit from Kronberg, for he is designing and I do not wish to be in his debt. I shall give him his money as soon as he returns!"

Silently the woman nodded her head.

Johanna kissed her brow and then locked the money in a drawer.

V.

Johanna sat from early morning until late at night and embroidered the handkerchiefs given her by Frau Lacherlich.

She had recently received a letter from Ina. The unhappy girl was still unable to reconcile herself to her fate.

A painful expression flitted over Johanna's face as she read the letter. Ina was still more unhappy than she was, for how much had she possessed and how much had she lost!

She wrote to her friend to comfort and calm her, but not the slightest complaint at her own fate was penned by her.

When she had completed the letter, she sat there half-dreaming. During the past few days she had tried more than once to draw the picture of her future and every time it had looked gloomy. Her courage had not yet forsaken her, but her hope was gradually disappearing.

In her excitement she rose. One thing was certain,—she would sooner die than sacrifice her innocence.

Her mother had gone out to make some trifling household purchases, she could therefore yield to her anxiety without needing to fear that her tears would betray her. She wept.

A soft rap was heard at the door. In affright she started and quickly passed her hand over her eyes in order to wipe away the tears. She scarcely dared to say, "Come in." Slowly the door was opened; Kronberg slipped through it into the room.

"Lord, you were weeping!" cried he. "Your pretty eyes are red! Has anyone harmed you? Tell me, and I will settle with him. It is a shame, a great shame, to call up tears into such lovely eyes. It is a shame, I say!"

Johanna required all her strength to control herself.

"Herr Kronberg, my mother is not at home; I pray you, therefore, to leave me," said she.

"Why should I leave you?" continued the broker. "Are you afraid of me? Do you think I would harm you? Kronberg never harms any one, for his heart is good. I am happy to find you alone, for I have something to say to you."

"I pray you to leave me," repeated Johanna.

"Fraulein, I shall leave you, but not now," replied the man impertinently. "What harm will it do you to listen to me? Sit down, for one is calmer in that position."

Johanna shook her head.

"Well, then remain standing," continued Kronberg. "Fraulein, it is an important matter which has brought me hither, a matter which I have carefully considered; for I am not in the habit of acting without first weighing the case. Do not fear, it is a good matter! When you were still at Herr Platener's, I saw you

frequently, and every time I thought to myself: Lord, that girl is pretty and I would have been happy, could I have done you a favor. When Herr Platener took his life and you left his house, I said: the pretty, young lady must be needy, and I came hither to offer you my aid. You unfeelingly refused it. It pained me. I said to myself: the young lady does not know you or she would know that you mean well. I came again, you rejected me the second time. It was not my intention to urge my assistance upon you, although I know that you need it; but I said to myself: is it any wonder that the young girl is ill-humored? I could not forget you, your image was constantly before me; I dreamed of you,—I, I, why should I hesitate, Fraulein, I want to know if you will be mine. I love you,—give me your hand."

He attempted to take Johanna's hand; in surprise, in horror she recoiled from his touch.

"Herr Kronberg!" she exclaimed. She was unable to say more; disgust and indignation struggled within her.

"Let me finish!" said the broker. "You only know Kronberg as you have always seen him, simply dressed and plain in his appearance. What should I do with fine clothes which cost money and do not help business. Fraulein, Kronberg could make as much display as the wealthiest man in town, for he is wealthy; he could keep his own carriage, and he will keep it if you will become his wife; he will rent a large, fine house; he will buy you the finest clothes and he will fulfill every wish! He will . . . . ."

"Enough!" at length interrupted Johanna, gathering together all her strength. "Leave me!"

"Do not be cruel!" interrupted Kronberg. "I love you so dearly, that I would gladly give up all I possess for you, do not reject me; let me, at least hope! Certainly, hope is poor security, but it is better than nothing. Consider what I have said to you; examine your heart and see if there is not a tiny corner in it for Kronberg—I am modest, very modest."

"It is unnecessary," impatiently replied Johanna. "One thing I can tell you positively, that I would rather die than marry you, and that no power on earth could force me to do so."

Kronberg raised his head, his eyes were half closed; the smile which up to that time had played about his mouth, had disappeared, the mask had fallen, and his true character showed plainly forth.

"Why? why?" he asked. "Will you not tell me, why?"

"Yes, I will tell you," said Johanna. "Because I know how you treated Herr Platener and because I therefore despise you."

Over the broker's face flitted a mocking smile.

"What do you know?" he cried. "I was shrewder than the haughty man whose wealth seemed boundless; I was shrewder, is that a fault? And on what do you wish to live? Do you think I do not know how little you receive for your work? You will not be able to earn more! Do not refuse me! I tell you a time will come when you will be glad if I knock at your door in order to bring you help."

"I will never accept help from you," said Johanna. "I would rather starve."

"And will you let your mother starve?" continued the broker. "Will you deprive the sick woman of the comfort she needs? Have you the right to reject the aid I bring your mother?"

"Yes, I have the right, because I will care for her!" cried Johanna. "Leave me!"

"I shall leave you!" repeated the broker. "You turn from me with disgust, as if I had offered you an insult,—and I could now put you to trouble."

"How?" asked Johanna, as she looked steadily at him.

"If I were to ask for the money which I gave you a few days ago?" asked Kronberg. "Did I say I would give it to her? I said nothing."

A crimson flush suffused the girl's cheeks; hastily she approached her sewing-table.

"You shall have the money back—here it is," said Johanna, as she handed the broker the roll of money.

In surprise the man retreated—he had not expected that.

"I will not take it!" he replied in confusion.

"Then I will give it to the first beggar I meet," continued Johanna. "I repeat that I would rather starve than accept anything from you, for I despise you!"

She turned her back upon the broker and advanced to the window.

Kronberg struggled with himself. Should he not once more try to persuade her in kindness? He knew

it would be vain. His features were distorted into a mocking smile.

"You despise me!" he cried. "Well, you shall learn too to fear me. You desire me for an enemy—I will become one! But do not complain if you suffer. Lord, a beggar despises Kronberg who could make her rich! Her contempt does not harm me!"

Hastily he thrust the roll of money into his pocket and left the room.

Johanna trembled when she was again alone; her forced composure disappeared.

A beggar!

She heard Kronberg's derisive laughter and it seemed to her as if a curse had been uttered over her.

Was she not a beggar?

There was one way, and like a dark shadow it entered her soul—there was one way which would put an end to all want, care and misery.

In order to banish that thought, she took up her embroidery.

Her mother, in the meantime, returned home and seemed to be very agitated.

"I just met Kronberg," said she. "He is very angry with you, for, he says, you insulted him."

Johanna was silent, with a feeling of pain she anticipated a conversation which she could not avoid.

"Is it true that he sued for your hand?" continued Frau Mosen with excitement.

"Yes."

"And you refused him?"

"Yes."

"He told me so, but I could and would not believe it, he is rich and I consider it sinful for you to trample your happiness thus under foot. Do not think that you will have such an offer a second time! One as rich as Kronberg can knock at any door and it will be opened to him, for he can give his wife all that she wishes."

"I do not long for wealth," replied Johanna quietly. "Was not Platener much wealthier and did he not lose all? He has even left his daughter poorer and more wretched than I am."

"He was imprudent, that was his ruin," said her mother.

"As long as he was fortunate, he was looked upon as shrewd and prudent. His misfortune has proved to me that money is mere empty show."

"You do not yet know the value of money; you do not know that it is a power which rules all, and if you do not care for its possession, I should still think that the thought of your sick mother, of making her life easier, would have prevented you from refusing Kronberg."

"Mother, do you wish to sell me?" she asked at length slowly, in an almost inaudible voice.

Her mother did not reply; she felt the reproach concealed in the question.

She left the room in order to escape her child's glance.

A few days later Johanna gathered together the embroidered handkerchiefs in order to take them to Frau Lacherlich.

With expectantly beating heart she entered the wealthy lady's house. The servant took the handkerchiefs from her and left her in the ante-room.

Finally she returned with the message that madame could not be seen and that Johanna must come again.

The next day Johanna called only to be put off once more.

"You must come to-night," said the maid.

Towards dusk, Johanna rang for the third time at Frau Lacherlich's. She was ushered into the ante-room and a few moments later madame entered hastily with impatience upon her features. She wore her hat and veil and seemed ready to go out.

"Lord, one is not undisturbed a moment!" said she in reply to Johanna's bow. "What do you want?"

The blood rushed to Johanna's cheeks. Timidly she asked if the work had given satisfaction, venturing to add that she had come to receive her pay for the same.

"And so you disturb me for the third time?" continued the woman impatiently. "I told you to keep the handkerchiefs clean. You did not do so; any other young girl in the union would have done better."

She stepped in front of the mirror in order to arrange the ribbons on her hat.

Tears entered Johanna's eyes.

"I took the greatest pains with them."

Frau Lacherlich shrugged her shoulders.

"Have you other work for me?" asked Johanna.

"No," was the curt reply.

Johanna remained silent.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Frau Lacherlich, turning around.

"I have to live on what my work brings," said the unhappy girl in a trembling voice.

"So you came three times," cried Frau Lacherlich. "Perhaps you thought you would not get your money? I am not in the habit of being dunned!"

She opened her purse, threw a dollar and a half on the table, and without another word, left the room.

Trembling with agitation, Johanna looked after her. Had she committed a wrong, that she should merit such treatment? Was that her pay for the difficult work? From the woman who was at the head of a Woman's League she had hoped to receive help and how disappointed she was! She could have cried aloud with pain and despair.

She stretched out her hand to take the money; it fell powerless at her side. The bitterest need might come to her—she could not take the money which had been flung at her as if she were a beggar.

Scarcely conscious of what she was doing, she rushed from the room and from the house.

In her excited condition she could not return home, she must not let her mother see her grief; she therefore hastened out of town to seek comfort in the woods.

Ladies and gentlemen whom she had frequently met at Platener's, passed by her; she lowered her head in order to avoid recognition; suddenly she heard a man step up to her and pronounce her name.

In affright she started; as she raised her eyes, a deep flush overspread her face, for she recognized Lieutenant von Brankow.

"I have for some time longed to see you," said he in a low voice. "It was a sorrowful day on which we last met. I have not forgotten it, but I hope that you now have forgiven the step I took. Who can struggle against the circumstances which arise? Am I to blame because my heart beat more tenderly for you than for Ina whom I fancied I loved and whom in reality I did not?" continued Brankow.

"I pray you, leave me!" besought Johanna.

"No, I will not leave you after having been so fortunate as to find you again!" cried the lieutenant. "Only after the bond which united me to Ina was broken, was I conscious of how infinitely I loved you. For days I walked through the streets hoping to meet you. I may have done Ina an injustice, but my heart need not ask for pardon, it is yours with a tenderness which nothing can rob you of."

Johanna scarcely heard the words which he spoke; she only saw that passers-by were looking at them curiously.

"Pray, pray, leave me!" said she with difficulty.

"Johanna, do not misjudge me," continued Brankow. "I beseech you do not think that I will thrust myself upon you! One thing only I ask of you, do not deprive me of all hope; give me a chance to sue faithfully for your love; try my heart, do not drive me to despair, for it is no wrong to love you!"

Johann's position became more painful; she would

have run away, had she not feared to awaken more attention.

Impelled solely by the thought of escaping the people, she hastily turned into a narrower and quieter side street.

Brankow remained by her side, his eyes beamed; by her turning into the side street, he was misled.

"Go!" cried the girl, anxiously.

"Not before you have told me that I may hope and may see you soon again! Tell me, when—when?"

"Never!" exclaimed Johanna, almost fainting.

"Then I will not go!" cried the lieutenant. "I will not rob myself of the good-fortune which has fallen to my lot accidentally to-day; I do not wish to lose you just as I have found you. I will not give you up, because I love you dearly! Johanna, pity me, do not deprive me of all hope, or you will drive me to despair!"

He seized the girl's hand.

Johanna started; she tried to withdraw it, but he held it forcibly fast. The blood had left her cheeks and in a scarcely audible voice she cried: "Free me! Help!"

"Only give me hope—only hope!" replied Brankow, still retaining her hand.

"I will help you, Fraulein!" suddenly said a strong voice, and a slender, young man in simple but neat attire approached her.

Scarcely had the lieutenant seen him than he let the girl's hand fall, his eyes glittered ominously and yet he seemed startled.

"I will free you from this man," continued the young man. "He knows that I have an account to settle with him and he will not force me to do it here."

The lieutenant uttered a few threatening words, but left immediately.

As if seeking protection, Johanna had seized the young man's arm; as she stood opposite him, she let her hands fall, an embarrassed flush tinged her cheeks and her eyes sank. She knew the young man for he lived in the same house as her mother; more than once she had met him on the stairs and he had been polite enough to step aside every time. His name she knew was Karl Wenzel.

He too had recognized her immediately and as he stood directly in front of her, his chest seemed to expand, his eyes rested upon the girl's beautiful features.

"I thank you for your help," said Johanna, and her voice trembled; she felt so weak that she was forced to lean against a tree.

As they walked on slowly side by side, Wenzel asked:

"Do you know Lieutenant von Brankow?"

"Yes," said Johanna in reply. "He was engaged to a friend of mine, but deserted her when she lost her fortune."

" That is like him!" said the young man.

"Do you know Brankow, too?" asked Johanna at length.

"I know him," replied Wenzel with agitation. "I

would, however, give a great deal had I never heard his name. His character is not only frivolous, it is bad; what cares he if he destroys the happiness of a human life?"

"Do you not perhaps judge him too severely?" said Johanna. "I only think his character weak."

"He is bad," repeated Wenzel bitterly. "My hard words seem to surprise you," he continued more calmly, "and yet I have a right to utter them. My blood is heated when I simply see him; I have yet satisfaction to demand of him and I hope the time will come in which he will have to give it to me."

As if lost in thought he stared before him.

"What has he done to you?" asked Johanna.

"I will tell you," said he. "I rarely speak of it for when I do so my heart contracts painfully and I feel as if I must hasten away in order to seek and punish the fellow. My father was a workingman, a simple, but scrupulously honest man, who never knowingly in his life committed a wrong action. He worked in a factory, received good wages and was proud of the fact that he had always kept his family from want. My mother died when I had just left school. I can still see my father, who was usually very grave and severe, standing by my mother's deathbed and weeping passionately; all comforting words were of no avail, for he had loved his wife dearly! Beside him, I stood with my sister, Clara, several years younger than I; we were my father's only children. My sister was an innocent, pretty girl, and because she resembled my mother, he lavished his entire wealth

of love upon her. I too loved her dearly. She was then fifteen years old and kept house for us; she did it cheerfully and well; she tried to soften my father's grief and she succeeded. Our lives were calm and peaceful. At that time I worked in the same factory as my father, and in the evening when work was done, we hurried home as quickly as possible, to meet Clara who always welcomed us joyfully.

"So two years sped by and it was a happy time. One evening as we were returning from the factory, my father asked me:

"'Do you know what ails Clara? She is quieter, her cheeks are paler; she is often absent-minded and does not take as much interest in household matters as she did.' I could not reply for I had not noticed it; but when I watched my sister more closely, I saw that my father was right. The secluded life seemed no longer to please her, she no longer dressed so simply and she seemed to have lost all interest in the home.

"It was some time before my father reproached her; as it became necessary to do so, she showed impatience and anger, which was quite contrary to her custom. She frankly replied that she too wished to enjoy her youth and that she did not care to keep house for us. My father could not comprehend the change which had taken place within her, he grieved over it and in the evening was not so happy as he had been.

"Shortly thereafter we learned that an officer—it was Lieutenant von Brankow who lived in our neigh-

borhood—frequently visited my sister when we were not at home. My father was beside himself, for his heart was filled with love for the girl. 'Come with me,' said he to me one evening. 'I can no longer stand it. I must know the truth. I am going to ask her myself and you must come too.'

"When we came home, we surprised my sister admiring the material for a new gown; she tried to conceal it, but my father prevented her. 'Where did you get that material?' he asked severely.

"She blushed in confusion. Only when my father repeated the question, did she reply that she had bought it with money she had saved.

"'You are telling an untruth!' cried my father. 'Lieutenant von Brankow gave it to you.'

"Clara turned pale; she attempted a denial, but her confusion could not be concealed.

"'I know that the lieutenant visits you,' continued my father. 'Send him the material back at once and write him never to come again! Write him that if I meet him here, I will treat him as someone who has violated my sanctuary!'

"Clara made no reply.

"On the following day her manner was unchanged, and one evening when we reached home she was not there. Hour after hour we awaited her return; finally when it grew late we determined to go in search of her. The entire night we wandered through the streets; we inquired of all her friends, but in vain.

"Morning broke, and we had not found her, nor did she return. My father only remained home a

short time, then he started out again to seek our lost one; I accompanied him. He was convinced that she had taken her life. It would have been well had she done so.

"Our search again proved fruitless. In a few days my father seemed to have aged years.

"He went to see Lieutenant von Brankow, who abruptly told him he knew nothing of Clara. On the third day we learned from a woman that my sister had rented apartments in a street quite far away.

"My father started as if struck by lightning. Together we went out in silence.

"We reached the street and house named. Slowly we ascended the steps my father paused to gather together his strength. We passed on, suddenly he stopped again and listened. He thought he heard Clara's voice in one of the rooms. I too had heard it. I saw him tremble violently and besought him to be more composed. He did not seem to hear my words. Hastily he opened the door. He stopped upon the threshold and the blood left his cheeks; Clara sat at a table with several officers and held a wine-glass in her hand. The laughter died out at once. Clara sprang up with the cry: 'My father!' and fled to the window. Then my father approached the wayward girl and seized her hand in order to take her with him. Lieutenant von Brankow advanced to prevent him; he said that my father had no right there, but the latter looked at him so fiercely that he timidly drew back. 'Do not attempt to hinder me from taking away my unhappy child or you will find

of what a father who is driven to despair is capable!' he cried, and without deigning to glance at the others present he led my sister from the room and from the house. When we reached home, my father sank into a chair and covered his face with both his hands. Clara wept and confessed that she loved Lieutenant von Brankow; he had said that he would marry her and never desert her. In vain my father represented to her that the lieutenant's intentions were not honest and honorable; she did not believe him. However, she promised to forget him, but my father's anxiety proved to me that he did not trust her. In a few days she again disappeared and left a letter in which she wrote that she could not leave the lieutenant and that we should not seek her for we should not find her. My father made no effort to find her, he knew she was lost; nor did he even see her again, for barely a year later he died after a lingering illness; grief for her had broken his heart—he could not bear the disgrace."

Johanna was deeply moved.

"Did you ever see your unhappy sister again?" she asked.

"I saw her again. Unknown to my father, I visited her, in order to persuade her to return; I found her, but she refused to go with me—she was already an outcast."

"Had Lieutenant von Brankow deserted her?" asked Johanna.

"Only too soon. I knew it would come. But I hope that some day he will be called to account for it."

Johanna was silent. She recalled the fact that she too had loved that man. Involuntarily the blood rushed to her cheeks.

"Is your sister still living?" she asked.

"To me she is dead! She sank lower and lower, I rarely see her; if I chance to meet her on the street I evade her for I can not forget how much my father suffered through her."

They walked calmly on as they talked; when they reached the house in which they lived, he offered Johanna his hand and frankly she laid hers in it.

"Thank you," said she. "You did me a great service to-day."

Then she hastened up the stairs before the young man could reply.

Wenzel was just five-and-twenty; notwithstanding, he was foreman in a furniture factory. The position he owed to his thoroughness, his industry and his conscientiousness. His employer, once a master-carpenter, named Frobel, who through his factory had earned a considerable fortune, had perfect confidence in him.

Towards the men under him he was strict, but just; most of them loved him and only a few envied him his position. Wenzel as yet knew little of life; as yet he did not know people as they were; he was guided more by his feelings than his judgment.

When he reached his room, he paced slowly up and down. He saw his sister again, hastening to meet his father and him with a joyous air. How her eyes had laughed when she had prepared some surprise

for them, and how happy their evenings had been.

Then he saw Johanna's dark and serious eyes upturned to his.

As he meditated, a rap was heard at his door, and before he could cry "Come in," a man of some thirty years entered, his hat upon his head, his left hand in his trousers pocket.

He was tall and slender; upon his sallow face were traces of a life of dissipation and of uncontrolled passions. He was the bookkeeper in Frobel's factory and his name was Hassel. His past life had been checkered. He had entered the Polytechnic school in order to learn building and by his exceptional capabilities, he could have obtained a brilliant future, but the dislike of work and his frivolity had only too soon gained the upper hand. Then he became a merchant; fortune favored him, he built up a very lucrative business, but as he followed his own pleasures, in two years he became a bankrupt.

Hard times had come for him.

Finally he obtained the position of bookkeeper in Frobel's factory. Frobel could not have found a better qualified man and Hassel seemed indeed to have changed, for in two years he had contracted no debts; his employer knew his past life and therefore kept a sharp eye on him.

An impatient expression flitted across Wenzel's face as he saw the bookkeeper enter. The latter had almost forced his friendship upon him and it was not always unpleasant, for a more genial companion

it would have been difficult to find; at that moment, however, the visitor was not welcome.

He informed Wenzel in his light manner that he had come to take him to a concert.

Wenzel did not care to go, but Hassel seized his hat, set it upon his head and drew the young man from the room.

Wenzel had not the strength to resist his will; but he went very unwillingly. A few hours before he would have gladly followed him for up to that time he had been pleased to meet Hassel's sister. It now seemed to him as if Johanna's dark eyes were fixed upon him half-sympathetically, half-sadly.

Hassel thrust his arm through that of the young man and chatted gayly as they walked along.

"You see, life has not the slightest value if one does not enjoy it!" said he. "All those who take life seriously are fools. They torture themselves, work and think constantly of the fuutre. If they have families, they have only one thought: to provide for them; they grow gray from labor and care and when at length they die—what have they had of life? What do they take with them?"

"The consciousness of having done their duty," replied Wenzel gravely.

His friend scoffed lightly at what he called his "nonsense," saying:

"My maxim is this: a merry life and a merry death!"

Meanwhile they reached the house in which the concert was to take place. When they entered the

hall heavy with cigar smoke and heated air, Wenzel involuntarily paused on the threshold filled with a sensation of disgust.

Hassel too paused, but only to glance searchingly around the room.

"Come, there they are!" said he then, preceding his friend.

Wenzel followed him.

At the table which the bookkeeper advanced towards, sat two gentlemen and a young girl, his sister.

"Here he is!" cried he laughing. "He was in his room and I had great difficulty in bringing him here!"

A slight blush flitted over Wenzel's face.

Betty drew a chair to her side and invited him to be seated. She seemed about twenty years of age. Her face was pretty and animated, and about her finely cut mouth hovered a pleasant smile. From beneath her large hat and her gray veil, which she had thrown back, peeped a mass of fair hair. Her costume was rich but not striking. In her dainty, white hands she held a fan which she now opened, now shut.

"So you did not wish to come?" said she in a soft voice, glancing shyly at him.

"I desired to be alone, moreover I was tired from walking," replied Wenzel.

"Then you will be vexed with my brother for bringing you here," continued Betty. "But as you are now in our midst, you must not decline to join in our merriment."

Hassel had ordered punch and he held his glass towards Wenzel.

"To-day you are my guest!" he cried. "We will celebrate this evening, I have an especial reason for being merry to-day! It is Betty's birthday. She is twenty."

"I forbade your telling it!" said Betty, feigning a pout. "What can it interest Herr Wenzel?"

Wenzel could do nothing but assure her to the contrary and drink to her health.

"You did not think I was so old?" asked Betty.

"Is twenty so old that you should seek to hide it? replied Wenzel. "Of what value are years? One can be young if one is fifty."

"Not if one is a woman!" said Betty. "What remains to us if youth is taken from us? You as a man will not understand me and yet I speak the truth. Let us drink to youth, you too are still young, and youth alone can enjoy life."

There was something fascinating in the girl's glance. How coquettishly and gracefully she raised the glass, how clear her laughter sounded! How merrily she shook her fair curls.

Hassel sent for more punch. Wenzel, before whose eyes the crowd in the hall already swam, refused to drink more.

Hassel laughed at him.

Betty laid her small white hand upon his arm and said:

"Would you mar the pleasure of my birthday?"

In those blue eyes there was a charm which he could not withstand. He seized her hand and held it fast.

"No, I will not mar it!" cried he, half emptying his glass to her health.

The presence of the young girl's hand ran through him like an electric spark; the rest of his composure was gone.

"We will celebrate your birthday!" cried he laughing, and he bade a waiter bring more champagne.

"Wenzel, to whom shall the first glass be drunk?" cried Hassel.

"It could only be drunk to one!" cried he, turning toward Betty.

He had departed from his usual, serious path, he would be gay and enjoy life while he had by his side a young and pretty maiden.

He ordered more champagne, for the bottles had soon been emptied.

He held Betty's hand in his, and she leaned her head languishingly upon his shoulder. Once more he raised his glass.

"To her we love!" cried he; he could no longer see clearly; all seemed to him to have blue eyes, fair hair and small, soft hands.

The glasses were clinked; he sank into a chair still retaining Betty's hand. He was oblivious to all else. He did not sleep, he seemed to be in a blissful dream.

When he finally aroused from his stupor, the music had ceased; the hall was almost empty, he saw before him the pale bookkeeper holding a bottle in his hand. He gathered together all his strength, rose and returned home.

When he awoke the next morning, it was already late; his head was heavy and dull.

With an effort he stood up, but he felt that he was unfit for business. He had a faint remembrance of the events of the preceding evening.

Of his return home he recollected only one thing, that Hassel had led him and that Betty had walked beside him.

Occupied with thoughts of what had happened, he sat in his room until the morning had sped by.

At noon Hassel entered without knocking, his hat upon his head.

"Ha ha! I knew at once what ailed you when you did not appear this morning at the factory," cried he. "You can bear very little. Ha ha! One learns a great deal in a life-time and you will learn to take more."

"I do not care to learn," replied Wenzel curtly; he did not attempt to conceal his vexation. "Nor do I think I shall ever be in such a position again, for my experience has been a good teacher."

"Ha, ha, dear friend, you take everything too seriously;" exclaimed the bookkeeper with a laugh

"As I think now, I shall think later," replied he gravely.

"Nonsense!" interrupted Hassel. "You are in an ill humor because your head is still heavy; I shall therefore come this evening to talk matters over with you."

He lighted a cigar and turned to leave the room.

"What have you to talk over with me?" asked Wenzel, detaining him.

"Have you then forgotten? Excellent! Excel-

lent!" cried Hassel, laughing. "See here, I certainly dare not tell my sister that."

Wenzel looked at him with increasing astonishment.

"What have I forgotten?" he asked.

"That you engaged yourself yesterday."

"I?"

"Yes, you!"

The blood receded from Wenzel's already pallid cheeks.

"To whom?"

"It is growing richer and richer!" laughed the bookkeeper. "You really seem to have forgotten that you confessed your love to my sister and engaged yourself to her. That is fine!"

Involuntarily Wenzel retreated; he stared fixedly at the bookkeeper; he was taxing his brain to recall the fact. It could not be.

"Cease jesting, I am not in a mood for it this morning."

The bookkeeper feigned surprise.

"I am not joking!" he returned.

"It is not true—it can not be!" exclaimed Wenzel.

Hassel interrupted Wenzel impatiently. "Do you think I have told a falsehood or that my sister would force herself upon you? Betty is a good girl, she has a sensitive nature," continued Hassel. "I should like to see her happy above all others. You will be happy too, Wenzel, for you will find a heart that loves you tenderly, that would make any sacrifice for you and has only one wish: to make you happy."

"It can not be!" cried Wenzel. "I know nothing of all this. I must have uttered the words unconsciously, they can not bind me for—for I do not love your sister!"

Hassel drew his tall form to its fullest height; his half-closed eyes looked forth threateningly.

"Herr Wenzel," said he slowly, emphatically. "You engaged yourself to my sister in the presence of several witnesses, you are bound and know what your duty is as a man of honor!"

He hastily left the room.

Wenzel sank into a chair and pressed his hand to his glowing brow.

For a long time he sat there motionlessly, at length he sprang up, for fresh doubts had arisen in him. Could he trust the bookkeeper's words?

He did not know what to believe and what to doubt; he must know the truth, where should he seek it?

Finally he concluded to ask Betty herself. And if he had really confessed his love for her in his intoxication, he would frankly tell her that he did not love her. Could she hold him to words spoken thus?

Evening came and he hastily dressed himself in order to go to her before her brothers should return home. He left the room and descended the staircase.

A woman came towards him, it was Johanna. With half-averted face she tried to pass him; he, however saw that her eyes were red from weeping and stopped her.

"You have been crying, what ails you?" he asked.

Johanna did not reply, but attempted to pass him.

"Have you so little confidence in me?" continued Wenzel, and his words sounded reproachful.

With tearful eyes Johanna looked up at him.

"My mother was taken suddenly ill," replied she, "I hastened away to fetch a doctor and found none. They all pretend to be busy because—because we are poor."

Against her will the last words escaped her lips.

"You found no doctor?" repeated Wenzel.

Johanna shook her head in the negative.

"My mother is alone and helpless, I must go to her!" cried Johanna. "I would have borne all patiently but this—is beyond my strength!"

With an effort she hastened up stairs.

"I will fetch a doctor!" called out Wenzel as he walked away.

He no longer thought of Betty; he saw only Johanna's dark and tearful eyes.

Barely fifteen minutes later he ascended the stairs with a doctor, happy to bring help.

With the physician he entered Johanna's bare but neat room. At her mother's bedside kneeled the girl, her cheek pressed against the sick woman's hand.

Gratefully Johanna glanced at Wenzel.

The doctor examined the invalid; his face was grave and calm and betrayed nothing; but a slight shrug of the shoulder told her how little hope he entertained.

He wrote a prescription and ordered that the patient receive the greatest attention and the best nourishment, which he said would benefit her more than all the medicine he could give her.

At those words the blood left the unhappy daughter's cheeks, and she stared fixedly at the doctor.

With tottering steps she escorted him to the door and when he was gone, she buried her face in her hands in despair. She had not observed that Wenzel lingered behind.

When he approached and spoke soothingly to her, she started and yet she breathed a sigh of relief as she looked into his sympathetic face.

"I will obtain the medicine for your mother," said he.

Silently Johanna nodded her head, for she had no one to whom to turn.

"Now grant me one more favor," added Wenzel. "Your mother must have good nourishment; I can read in your eyes that you are unable to provide it for her; accept this, if you please."

He handed her a sealed paper in which were some of his savings.

"No—no, I can not accept it!" cried Johanna.

"Yes, you can," said Wenzel. "I have no other object than to help you, and what I give you I can spare."

Johanna remained silent.

"I would look upon your acceptance of it as a proof of your confidence," continued Wenzel, "and I assure you I will never abuse it. Think of your sick mother!"

Almost hurriedly Johanna took the money, her hand trembled.

"I do not know how to thank you," she began.

"Do not thank me," interrupted Wenzel. "I have my thanks in the faith you have put in me."

He left the room to obtain the necessary medicine for Frau Mosen.

VI.

Wenzel had taken the medicine to the invalid and was descending the stairs, when he saw Hassel ascending Hoping that the bookkeeper had not perceived him, he tried to enter his room; but Hassel espied him before he succeeded in doing so.

"Where have you been?" he asked in his pleasantest manner. "You always told me that you knew no one in the house."

A slight flush of embarrassment appeared upon the young man's face; he did not wish to tell the truth and he could find no excuse.

"Who lives upstairs?" continued Hassel.

"I do not know," replied Wenzel. "I went out for a walk because my head ached, and when I returned I thoughtlessly ascended another flight of stairs."

The mocking smile which flitted across the bookkeeper's face plainly betrayed that he did not credit those words.

"Had that happened yesterday, I would have thought it more probable," he replied, seating himself and lighting a cigar.

"Sit down, Wenzel," he added. "It makes me uncomfortable to have anyone stand when I am seated. I was somewhat overhasty this forenoon, it would have been better had I not said what I did to

you. I have come to ask you to say nothing about it to Betty; you know all girls are sensitive, and I should not like to have a quarrel with my sister."

Wenzel had almost forgotten his words, so preoccupied had he been with other matters.

"I do not know to what you allude," he said.

"I told you you were bound and would, as a man of honor, know what to do. As I said, I am sorry for those words, for it goes without saying: it did not for a moment occur to me to doubt your honor. Nor did Betty either. She is happy and has already told all her friends. I do not know who told it at the factory, but this afternoon several of the men congratulated me. You are well liked and all are glad that you think of establishing a home of your own. Even Herr Frobel knows about it, did you tell him?"

The blood left Wenzel's cheeks; he divined the bookkeeper's object—he himself had circulated the report, in order to force him to the step.

"What should I have told him?" he cried, springing up in agitation.

"Of your engagement to my sister," returned Hassel calmly. "I think it quite right that you should have told Herr Frobel at once, before he found it out from others."

"I did not engage myself to your sister!" exclaimed Wenzel. "This morning you could confuse me; but now I know what I said to her, and that I did not tell her I loved her."

The bookkeeper rose slowly, gravely.

"Fortunately I heard it myself and have witnesses besides," said he.

Wenzel's self-possession vanished.

"If you had a hundred witnesses, I would dispute it!" cried he. "And if I had forgotten myself when under the influence of wine, I should never consider myself bound. I do not love your sister, therefore I shall never become her betrothed."

Hassel's brows contracted; his eyes were almost closed, yet they glittered uncannily.

"Will you repeat those words?" he asked.

"I spoke plainly enough and am convinced that you understood me."

"Yes, I did!" cried Hassel, drawing himself up. "I did not want to believe that you would act so dishonorably towards my sister."

Involuntarily Wenzel started at that insult, retreated a pace.

"Take back those words!" he cried violently.

"Will you recognize my sister as your fiancée?"

"Never!"

"Then I repeat that you have acted dishonorably toward her!"

"I shall demand satisfaction for those words!"

"Haha! How will you do so?" cried Hassel mockingly. "Do you think I fear you? I will make public your treatment of her; all the world shall learn of it."

"Do not do so," replied Wenzel, "or I shall be obliged to explain how your sister thrust herself upon me."

"Not another word! You will perhaps say the same of me! You shall learn to know me as your

enemy, for you are henceforth unworthy of my friendship! You now know what to expect."

Hassel left the room. When he reached the court, he paused and looked at the house. Above Wenzel's room was a window in which was a faint light.

Who lived there?

On his way out at the lodge he pleasantly asked the porter for a light, at the same time giving him a cigar and by roundabout questions obtaining from him the information he desired with regard to the occupant of the room above Wenzel's.

The following morning when Wenzel returned to work, several of the men approached him in order to congratulate him. He had anticipated that and therefore maintained his composure.

"I can not accept your congratulations for I am not engaged. Who told you this?"

"Herr Hassel himself confirmed the report," remarked a workman.

"Then he told you an untruth," replied Wenzel with calm decision. "I have never been engaged to his sister and never shall be."

That day it was impossible for Wenzel to go to Johanna and offer his aid, for a friend whom he had not seen for years, called upon him and invited him to spend the evening with him and he did not return home until late at night. Softly he ascended the stairs in order not to disturb her.

Only on the following day when work was ended, did he hasten to Johanna in order to inquire for her mother. Johanna's cheeks were strikingly pale, her eyes were swollen from weeping.

"My mother is very bad," she said, "her strength is leaving her so fast that she is unable to speak."

"Has the doctor been here again?"

"To-day."

"What did he say?"

Johanna hid her face in her hands and sobbed violently; he seemed to have given her little hope.

"Calm yourself," Wenzel sought to soothe her. "Were the worst to happen, you should not be left alone! You are exhausted, I will watch beside your mother."

Johanna shook her head.

"Shall I not remain here?" asked Wenzel sympathetically.

"No, I pray you, go"?

"Have you no relatives?"

"None."

"And yet you refuse my aid. Have you not more confidence in me?"

Johanna was silent; when he repeated his question, she replied hastily: "Yes, yes, but you must not remain here."

"Wherefore not?"

"I pray you, leave me," returned Johanna, averting her head.

Wenzel went. Thoughtfully and sadly he sat in his room thinking of Johanna. He loved her, that he knew.

Sitting by the open window and inhaling the cool, refreshing night air, he fell into a reverie.

He was alone in the world; he had one sister, it

was true, but she was dead to him—to him she was lost.

Soon the unhappy girl upstairs would be alone.

He listened repeatedly—all above was still. Perhaps Johanna had fallen asleep. Then he heard a loud, piercing shriek and immediately afterwards a heavy fall.

In terror he rose, he held his breath to listen, all was still. Without hesitation he hurried from the room and up the stairs; for a second he listened with anxiously beating heart at Johanna's door, then he entered.

The door of the room in which the sick woman lay was ajar, a faint glimmer of light showed him the way. It fell upon the pale, fixed face of the dead; beside the bed lay Johanna in a swoon.

He now understood the cry.

For a few moments he stood there motionless, he approached the unconscious girl, raised her, bore her to her room and laid her upon the hard sofa. She did not move; her eyes were closed, her lips pale, as if there were not a drop of blood in them. She still gave no sign of life. Was she too dead?

In nameless fear, Wenzel hurried back to the other room, in order to fetch light and water and bending over the sad but lovely face of the girl, he sprinkled her temples with water.

In a short time Johanna opened her eyes which fell upon a pair of eyes filled with sympathy and anxiety. At first she did not seem to remember what had happened; a faint smile passed over her features, as if she had seen a vision.

That condition only lasted a few seconds, then the terrible reality seized hold upon her.

"She is dead, she is dead!" cried she. She tried to rise, but sank back upon the sofa.

Wenzel did not try to stop her tears.

Silently he stood beside the weeping girl.

"Now I am entirely alone!" cried Johanna at length. "Why did not my eyes close at the same time as hers?"

"You shall not be left alone," said Wenzel consolingly.

She scarcely heard his words. Morning was beginning to dawn when she gathered herself together and asked Wenzel to leave her.

"I thank you for your sympathy," said she. "You have given up your entire night to me, now think of yourself!"

"Are a few wakeful hours a sacrifice?" replied Wenzel. "You have great cares, leave the fulfilment of them to me, I will attend to the interment."

"I can not—it is too much!" cried Johanna.

At length she yielded to his prayer and at his request sought rest.

The poor woman was quickly put under the sod; the grave-digger scarcely left Wenzel sufficient time to cast a handful of earth upon the coffin.

With a heart filled with real grief he returned alone from the cemetery.

Johanna sat at her window as he entered the room; she rose slowly and came to meet him, to thank him for his kindness; she no longer wept, but what a

painful expression of loneliness lay upon her pretty face!

"Johanna, will you listen to me calmly?" asked Wenzel, seating himself opposite her. "Do not misconstrue what I wish to say to you, for that reason do I tell you at such a sorrowful hour. Fate brought us together, I knew you before I came to your aid in the wood. Your eyes had already made a deep impression upon me!"

"Herr Wenzel!" interrupted Johanna.

"Let me finish!" implored the young man. "If I tell you to-day when your heart is bowed down with grief, how deeply and tenderly I love you, if I choose this solemn moment for this confession I do it that I may have a right to comfort you and to stand by you. I wish to help you to bear your sorrow. I love you dearly, Johanna, and have only one wish: to be able to consecrate my life to you."

He seized Johanna's hand, but she withdrew it; she was confused, for she had not expected that avowal.

"Your heart is not free—you are already bound!" she replied.

"I am free and my heart, all my thoughts are yours!" cried Wenzel in agitation.

Johanna rose, took a letter from a box and silently handed it to him.

Wenzel glanced through it; it told of his engagement to Hassel's sister and was not signed, still he thought he could recognize Hassel's handwriting.

"And this—this—you believe?" cried he.

Johanna did not reply.

In a few words he related the facts as they were.

"I never loved his sister!" he added. "Johanna, since I have seen you, you alone have ruled in my heart. Tell me to-day that you will trust yourself to my keeping. I am poor and have nothing but what I earn, but I will keep you from want. Tell me that you will be my wife."

After a pause, she calmly extended her hand to Wenzel and said firmly:

"I will be yours. I will be faithful to you for your happiness from this hour is mine and your honor is mine."

Blissfully Wenzel pressed Johanna to his breast.

"I thank you for those words!" he cried. "Now you are mine, now I have a right to care for you; now I am no longer alone! I will hold you sacred, Johanna; you shall be wife, mother and sister to me."

It was a solemn betrothal. Silently, hand in hand they sat beside one another. Although Johanna's eyes were sorrowful when she raised them to her lover's, the hope of happiness gleamed in them and she pressed the hand to which she confided herself.

VII.

Ina had not found the required rest at her aunt's house.

The latter, Thekla Bremer, an old lady of sixty, tried to comfort her, but she did not understand Ina's grief.

Her consolation consisted solely in efforts to convince the girl of the wickedness of men to whom she, as a disappointed old maid, cherished a decided aversion.

"Child, men are all bad," said Thekla. "Trust a man and you will be deceived! I am happy because I have never allowed myslf to be cheated. Learn to hate men, as I do; they deserve nothing better."

Life with her aunt and her cronies became more and more unbearable to Ina. She would have left her long before had she known whither to turn. She was entirely alone; her father's former friends had deserted her; life seemed sadder and more melancholy than ever.

In the midst of her despair, she received Johanna's letter in which she informed her both of her mother's death and of her engagement.

Ina read the letter again and again, for the letter brought her a breath of peace.

Ina gave it to her aunt to read; the latter scoffed

at the sentiment expressed therein, and observing her dejection taunted her with still loving the lieutenant and with her evident willingness to pardon him should he present himself before her.

"Yes, I would forgive him," replied Ina.

"Is that so?" cried she, and her voice trembled with agitation. "You would perhaps even invite him to my house? Well, a welcome from me would not be lacking! See, had I known that you were such a fool, that you would so stubbornly resist all reasoning, I would never have taken you with me. That is the thanks I receive for taking you when you were alone and no one bothered about you!"

Ina's pale cheeks at those words grew still paler, for she recalled with what affection Johanna had clung to her.

"Well, perhaps Lieutenant von Brankow would have helped you!" cried Thekla mockingly, and with those words she left the room.

Fixedly, silently Ina looked after her; those scornful words had wounded her so deeply that she could not speak.

But of one thing she felt assured; she could not remain in her aunt's house where she felt more alone than ever in her life. The thought of escaping her aunt and hastening to Johanna arose within her, and she made a hasty decision.

She passed a sleepless night, and when her aunt entered her room the next morning, she feigned indisposition in order to be left alone. But her aunt did not leave her, she urged her to drink some tea,

and only at noon did she repair to her room to allow Ina some time to rest. Making a hasty decision she donned her cloak, took a few necessaries and left the house quietly. She reached the station in safety. Fate seemed favorable to her, for the train which was to take her to her friend, would soon leave town, probably before her aunt would miss her.

It was late at night when she reached the city. Timidly she left the platform, no carriage was to be had.

In order not to be recognized by any old acquaintances, she drew the veil over her face and hastened towards Johanna's house. Her heart throbbed loudly with joy and fear, for she had never been on the street alone at so late an hour. She turned purposely into a quieter and dimly-lighted side-street, because she hoped there at least to meet no one who knew her.

She saw several officers coming towards her. For an instant she hesitated—should she turn back? That would attract attention; she crossed the narrow street and walked rapidly on.

"See, there is a solitary night-bird!" cried one of the officers, laughing.

She fancied she recognized the voice—no, it was not possible! She saw the officer cross over and approach her.

"Leave the poor thing in peace!" said one of the men.

"No, I want to see if she is young; and if she is pretty I will make her pay toll!" cried the owner of the voice so familiar to her.

The officer caught up with her and laid his hand upon her arm.

"Halt, little one! Raise the veil!" cried he. "Ha, ha! Not so coy!" continued the officer, heedless of his comrade's warning. "Be silent! At this hour only night-birds fly!"

He tried to seize Ina.

"Back!" cried she in an angry voice.

"Be still, little one, I shall not kill you!" cried the officer, throwing his arm about her, forcibly raising her veil and leaning over her in order to kiss her.

Ina uttered a loud, terrified cry, and the officer recoiled when he saw the girl's pale face—it was Brankow.

For a second he stood motionless; his lips moved but he uttered no sound; then he hurried away.

"She does not seem to be very pretty," said his comrades, as he rejoined them. "You are silent; what has happened? Did what you saw beneath the veil startle you so much? Did you see the veiled image of Sais?"

Brankow left them quickly and silently; he could not bear their ridiculing remarks.

When Brankow left her, Ina leaned half-fainting against the wall of a house. She then gathered the remainder of her strength and hastened to the house in which Johanna lived. The porter opened the door and asked whom she wished to see. She could not reply; like someone persecuted she hurried through the dark hall and up the dark stairs.

Violently she knocked at Johanna's door and when

Ina uttered a loud, terrified cry, and the officer recoiled when he saw the girl's pale face.—Page 102,

the latter opened it, she cast herself upon her breast with a half-suppressed cry.

In affright Johanna embraced her friend.

"Ina, where do you come from?" cried she.

Ina could not reply. She was at length resting upon the breast for which she had yearned and on which she could weep.

Johanna led her friend into her small room and there the two girls sat until late at night.

VIII.

Ina remained with her friend a few weeks, then her aunt came to fetch her. She willingly returned with her for she no longer feared the hatred which the old lady cherished towards men. Her heart was not Brankow's; there was a void within it which nothing could fill.

Johanna had grown fonder and fonder of Wenzel and one Sunday afternoon, Johanna and he approached the altar and were joined in the bonds of holy matrimony; only two of her friends and a friend of Wenzel's were present.

The ceremony was more than simple, still it impressed the couple; they needed not to be reminded that they were bound for life.

After the marriage they repaired to a village near the town. Wenzel was supremely happy, while upon Johanna's pretty face lay an expression of thoughtful seriousness.

"I would now change places with no one!" said Wenzel to Johanna.

"I should like to know if twenty years from now we shall love one another so dearly."

"I hope more dearly. Upon my heart you can safely depend," replied Johanna.

"And you upon mine!" cried Wenzel.

Carriages drove up to the much-frequented inn; from one of the finest Johanna saw a gentleman alight with his wife.

Hastily she turned her head aside, for she knew them both; she had seen both at Platener's house; it was the wealthy merchant, Wolfram, with his wife. They entered the garden slowly.

Although Johanna purposely averted her head, she was nevertheless recognized by the lady; for a moment she paused and looked through her glasses, then she hastily advanced and uttered Johanna's name.

With a blush the latter rose.

"Ah! I have not seen you for a long time!" cried the woman, with half-familiar, half-condescending friendliness. "I have not seen you since Platener's death and thought you had left town. What has become of Ina? The poor girl was terribly afflicted, for she was innocent of her father's crimes."

Johanna informed her that Ina was at her aunt's.

"Did her betrothed leave her in the lurch too?" continued the wealthy lady.

Johanna replied in the affirmative.

"How are you getting on, Johanna?" questioned the woman. "You too must have suffered by Platener's death."

"I was married to-day," said Johanna.

"Married?" repeated Frau Wolfram in surprise. "To whom? What is your husband?"

She glanced at Wenzel, beside whom Johanna had been seated.

"He is foreman in a furniture factory."

A mocking smile flitted over the interrogator's face. "Foreman!" said she. "I thought you would make a better match, for you had opportunities to learn to know many young men who were more suitable for you."

A dark flush overspread Johanna's face; those words sounded like a slur upon her husband.

"Why did you not come to me? I could have helped you to make a better match," interpolated Wolfram, whose eyes rested with pleasure upon Johanna's pretty face. "Perhaps necessity drove you to this step; well, I hope you will never rue it."

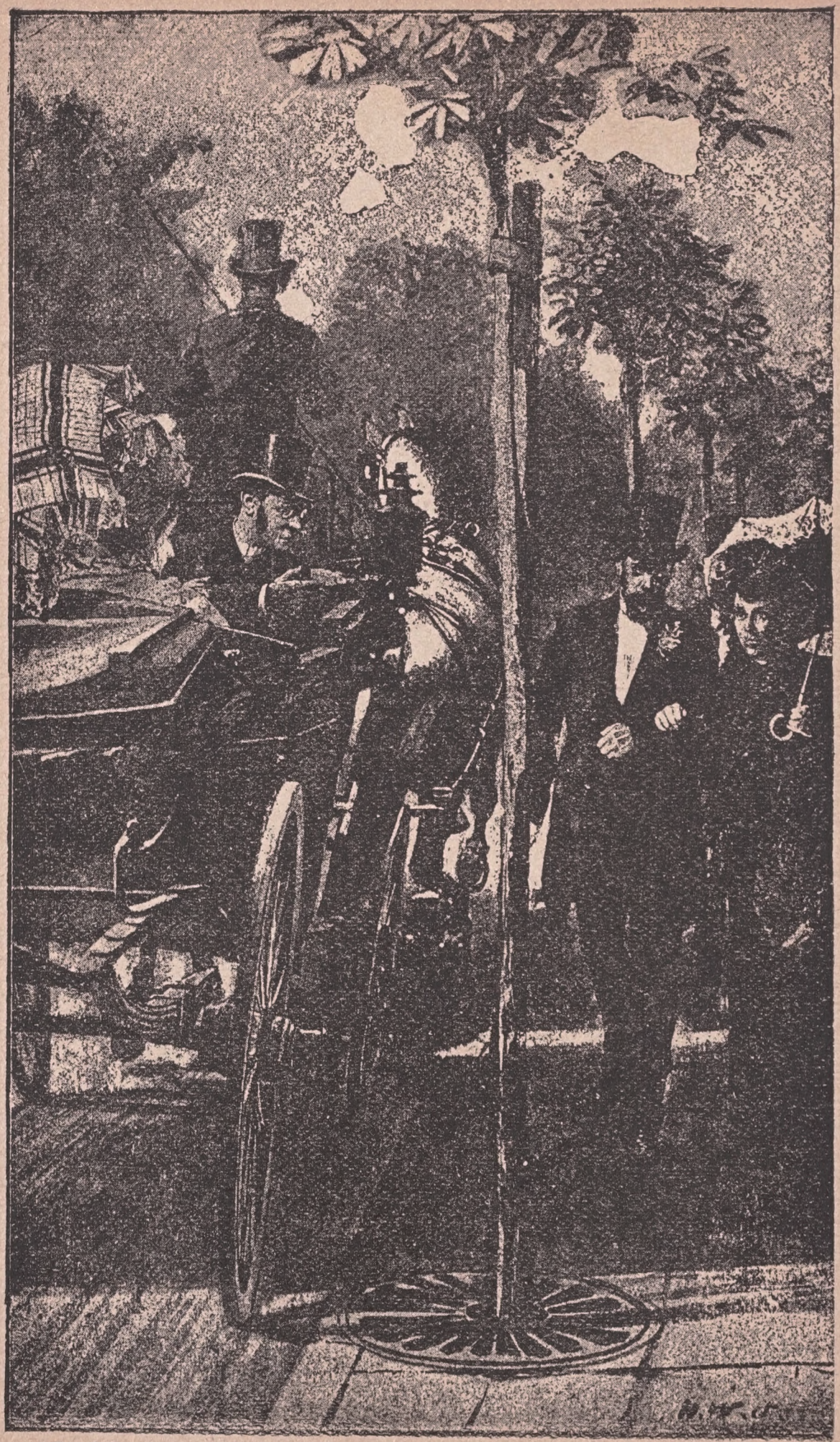
He had uttered the words in so loud a tone that Wenzel must have heard them. Trembling with excitement, Johanna looked at her husband; he was talking earnestly with his friend; it was to be hoped that he had not heard those words.

She raised her head and looked Wolfram full in the face.

"I shall not regret it, for I love and respect my husband," she replied. "After the sorry experiments I had made, this firm conviction took possession of me: that work is the surest foundation for a happy life. I can not look down upon work, because I esteem it, and because it is a capital that will bring its interest every time."

That answer seemed to surprise the wealthy merchant; he glanced at his wife and then shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps it is as well that you should remain in the station to which your father belonged," said Frau



"I wish you much joy, Wenzel; you seem to be very happy on your wedding day!"—Page 109.

Wolfram. "I do not look down upon the working-class because we can not do without them; however, they will always have a peculiar rank of their own, and I think that must be because they will never obtain the refinement which wealth makes possible. I hope you may prosper."

With a proud nod of the head she proceeded on her way.

Visibly agitated, Johanna again joined her husband; she made an effort to conceal the wound made by the haughty woman of the world—but she did not succeed.

"What ails you?" asked Wenzel in astonishment.

"Nothing, but I pray you let us return home," replied Johanna.

"No, we will celebrate to-day! What has happened? Who was the lady with whom you were speaking?"

"I met her at Platener's—she inquired for Ina."

"And did that agitate you so much?"

"That did not— I do not feel well," replied she.

Wenzel looked at her searchingly; did he divine that she was not telling him the truth?

"It will pass off," said he.

"Please let us go home," again implored Johanna.

Wenzel rose in silence.

On their way home, they met Hassel, his sister and two gentlemen, driving in a fine carriage. Wenzel turned away his head in order not to see them, but in a mocking voice the bookkeeper called out: "I wish you much joy, Wenzel. You seem to be very

happy on your wedding day! Ha, ha! If your marriage only does not terminate like your engagement!"

Wenzel paused and drew himself up to his full height; he was about to reply angrily to that taunting remark, but the carriage rolled quickly by and Johanna drew him gently away with her.

They entered the dwelling which from that time forth they were to occupy in common. It was small and modest, but from every corner happiness peeped forth.

Blissful weeks and months passed by. Wenzel lived only for his young wife, who loved her husband dearly and who was happy; still, frequently a dim foreboding arose within her that her happiness would be short-lived. Although she appreciated her husband's frank and honorable character, her shrewd penetration had already divined that he was weak; he was easily led, and might by a scheming mind be influenced against his principles.

At present there was no danger; he lived only for her, was satisfied with his position, the wages of which were sufficient for all his requirements, and used every effort to improve himself. Had not the owner of the factory worked his way up from a small beginning?

IX.

Frobel, the large manufacturer, was envied by all his employés. He was rich, had a fine mansion and rode in his own carriage. Could he not indulge every desire?

Frobel was wealthy but not as happy as his workmen thought, for his family relations were not of the pleasantest.

He had only two children, a daughter and a son, and it was they who marred his happiness. As neither he nor his wife were educated, their children received only a superficial education. He had spoiled and humored his daughter, Engeline, and his wife had done the same with their son, Gerhard; for years they had reproached themselves and the consequence was discord in the family.

For several years Engeline had been married to a landed owner named Halben. Frobel as once proud of his daughter's fortunate marriage, but that happiness did not last long. Halben's estate was mortgaged; as he cared little for the management of it, he was soon forced to sell it.

For some time Engeline never addressed a letter to her father, without asking for money, and he sent it with the assurance that he would send no more, but he was always weak enough to break his word.

He likewise was annoyed by his son's conduct. He acted so disgracefully at the Polytechnical school that his father had to take him away. He then fell in with a number of soldiers in whose company he acquired extravagant tastes. He drank champagne and played cards.

His father paid his debts and hoped that Gerhard would begin a new life; but in that hope he was disappointed. He did not sever his connections with his extravagant companions, and when he was not with them, he was so fatigued, that he found it was more comfortable to lounge upon a sofa at home and to smoke a cigar than to repair to the factory.

Gerhard was not in the habit of supping with his parents; he did not like the flavor of his mother's tea, and his father's wine was too common. So much the more astonished was Frobel when Gerhard one evening entered the room as he was about to sit down to the table with his wife.

"Ah, I did not know that you would be here to eat with us," cried Frau Frobel with delight, as she rang the bell and bade the maid who entered lay another cover.

"Thank you, I care for nothing to eat," replied Gerhard curtly, casting himself into a rocking-chair.

He was finely dressed and seemed ready to go out; his face was inclined to be handsome, while upon it was an expression of weariness. He was always bored in his parents' company. His mother annoyed him with her attentions, his father with his reproaches and admonitions.

"At least you will drink a cup of tea," continued Frau Frobel.

"You know I never drink tea," replied Gerhard, impatiently, "not even when I am ill."

His mother glanced anxiously at him.

"Are you ill?" cried she, drawing a step nearer. "You are not prudent enough. You should be so for my sake."

Almost angrily Gerhard turned away his head.

"Mother, I pray you!" cried he impatiently. "I feel very well, and moreover I am no longer a child."

Since his son's entrance Frobel had slowly paced the room and had as yet uttered no word. He was not in a good-humor, for Engeline had again written him for money. "Leave your son in peace, you see he has simply come to call upon us!" cried he at length. "You ought to know that our table is too simple for him; he is used to better fare than his father!"

Those sharp words did not seem to make the slightest impression upon Gerhard; he shrugged his shoulders slightly, while his eyes rested calmly upon his father. "I have very little time to-day," said he. "Baron von Gersdorffen has invited me to supper and I am ready to go."

"Baron von Gersdorffen?" repeated Frau Frobel. She could not conceal her satisfaction that her son was intimate with a baron, although she knew that the latter's reputation was not of the best.

"Are many invited to the supper?" asked his mother curiously.

"No, it is only a small company, just his intimate friends," replied Gerhard, looking at his watch.

"It is already late," said Frau Frobel.

"Yes, it is time to go," said Gerhard. "I should be there now did I not dread meeting him, for I owe him five hundred marks and can not pay them."

Frobel paused at those words.

"You owe him money?" he asked. "For what?"

"I bet with him and lost," said Gerhard, as calmly as if the bet were for a five-penny piece.

"Unparalleled!" cried Frobel, "you bet for such a sum, while you have never earned a dollar in your life! At your age I would have considered myself fortunate had I had five hundred marks! My father could give me nothing! I had to take care of myself, to work in the day time and to get my education at night."

Again his son shrugged his shoulders and rose.

"Behind me," continued his father angrily, "lies a life full of work and care; by industry I made what I have. You will surely never do that, for you do not know what work is."

Gerhard toyed with his watch-charm.

"I am satisfied with my situation," said he; "will you give me the money I need?"

"No," replied Frobel decidedly. "If you want to bet for such sums, earn the money yourself."

"Frobel, you must not expose your son in this way to his friends," interposed his wife. "I concede that it was wrong of him to bet so high, but as he has done so, you must not refuse to help him; he will never do so again."

"I thought you would take his part," exclaimed the husband. "You have always spoiled him and you can now see to what it leads."

"Stop, mother!" cried Gerhard. "Father only has money for Engeline. She always gets what she asks for! Although I have the same claims that she has."

"Be silent!" exclaimed Frobel violently. The words irritated him all the more because they were true.

"So you have!" agreed the mother.

Frobel cast a bitter glance at his wife; then he hastily turned toward his desk.

"Here—here!" cried he, throwing the money upon the table. "Squander what I have worked so hard for! Warnings are of no avail; it is the fashion for children now-a-days to be more clever than their parents."

Gerhard seemed scarcely to have heard his father's words; he walked to the table and put the gold pieces in his purse. A contented expression rested upon his features, for he had obtained what he desired. With a hurried bow he left the room and as he descended the stairs he whistled an operatic air.

In the gayest mood Gerhard walked along the street. He cared not for the ill-feeling his conduct had caused. Suddenly a hand was laid upon his shoulder and a voice cried: "Frobel, I thought you were there long ago!"

He turned quickly.

A tall, slender form stood before him. The deep-set, gray eyes had a dissipated look, the sharply-cut lips had a bitter, sarcastic expression, which was not

even softened by the fair mustache above them. The cheeks were pale and sunken. The man was scarcely thirty, but he looked at least fifteen years older; even his form was somewhat bent. It was Baron von Gersdorffen, of whom Frobel had spoken with such scorn; and of whom many spoke more severely still.

"Ah, Baron, it is you!" cried Gerhard. "I could not come sooner, for I had to squeeze money out of my old man first; and that is not easy when he is bad-tempered. It was very hard to-day to get any; do you know what strategy I had to employ?"

"Well?"

"I told him I had lost a bet with you of five hundred marks, and that it was unpleasant for me to meet you without having paid my debt."

"Excellent!" laughed the baron. "And I suppose he then railed against me for leading his son astray."

Arm-in-arm they proceeded on their way, entered a wine vault and one of the small private rooms, from which issued loud voices.

They were greeted by five men, who were seated at a table drinking wine, with reproaches for their tardiness.

One of the five our reader has already made the acquaintance of: it was the bookkeeper, Hassel. Beside him sat a short, bent form, with dark, malicious eyes, it was the joiner, Schramm. He complained of every one, and was possessed of a malignant, sly disposition, so that no one dared to oppose him, because every one feared him.

His neighbor seemed to belong to a race of giants,

Everything about him was large, his form, his hands, his face, his mustache, his thirst and his stupidity. His name was von Bursten and he had been master of the horse at some insignificant prince's.

He served the company as a butt because he was too dull to comprehend their jokes.

The fourth was a retired merchant, one Mertens, who was always bored and in consequence yawned incessantly.

The fifth was a Doctor Russel, who sat quietly in a corner and was the most interesting person of all.

He was undoubtedly the cleverest man there, and never participated in the conversation, but occasionally interpolated a few witty or malicious words.

His acquaintances called him *doctor* and behind his back the *pump Doctor*, for he owed every one something and no one ever expected to receive a dollar.

The baron had first introduced Gerhard into the circle. The latter assured the baron that any company into which he took him was agreeable to him, although he did not fancy being thrown with his father's bookkeeper. But Hassel had met him so affably, that they speedily became friends and stood upon a familiar footing.

The aim of that small company assembled was not other than to gamble. The six members beside Gerhard had a secret understanding that they would divide the profits; in order to do so every one had promised occasionally to introduce a guest who had money and which was taken from him without his suspecting the agreement made.

On his entrance, Hassel rose to welcome Gerhard. The two men shook hands. Hassel drew young Frobel aside.

"Have you money?" he asked.

"Certainly!" replied Gerhard, naming the sum he had received from his father.

The bookkeeper's eyes sparkled. "Let us play together to-day," said he. "I should like to see the others lose."

As they conferred, the baron called to Gerhard to come and partake of the wine he had ordered.

Then the table was cleared, cards brought and the game began.

At first Gerhard won, then he lost, and scarcely two hours had flown when his last gold-piece was gone. His face glowed with excitement.

"Have you any money?" he asked Hassel.

The latter took out a few dollars.

"This is all I have," he cried. "Luck seems entirely to have forgotten that I still exist."

The baron observed that Gerhard was not staking. "Frobel, you are remarkably timid to-day!" cried he. "Here," and he pushed ten gold pieces towards him. "You know I am aways glad to lend you a trifle."

Gerhard hesitated.

"Take it! Borrowed money brings luck!" whispered Hassel. "You may win back what you have lost; only keep up your courage."

Gerhard took the money; it was a matter of indifference to him whether he lost ten gold pieces more or less.

And he lost them in less than an hour. In excitement he rose.—Page 120.

And he lost them in less than an hour. In excitement he rose

"I can not play any more; I am losing all the time!" cried he.

Nor could he be persuaded to drink or play, and the company broke up.

X.

Gerhard and Hassel walked along in silence. Gerhard was vexed at his loss; Hassel was secretly delighted, for he would obtain a large share of the profits, but his face was more moody than that of his companion.

"We both made mistakes to-day!" said he at length. "You lost more than I did, but you can stand it better."

"I shall give up playing," said Gerhard.

"That would be absurd!" said Hassel. "We will first win back what we lost. Then it will be time enough to give up."

"The past few months I have lost a good deal and I do not know where I shall get the money. To my father I surely cannot turn again so soon."

"There is Kronberg."

"The fellow is impudent; I do not want anything to do with him. I was there to-day to get money; he said he had none and was not able to get any."

"There must be some misunderstanding," said Hassel. "Kronberg has money, although he pretends to be a poor man who has to struggle for an existence."

"He even refused to prolong the note he has from me."

"He is mad. I will see him to-morrow morning.

He must do as you wish: prolong the note and procure you money! Tell me how much you require; he shall give it to you."

"Have you such power over him?" asked Gerhard doubtfully.

"I should think so," said Hassel with a smile. "I shall simply tell him you will apply to his friend Lowenberg, then he will give it to you, for he grudges his *friend* a transaction. How much do you want? May I advise you? Do not apply to Kronberg so often, but borrow a large sum, that will increase his confidence, and I assure you he will agree to it. Will three thousand marks be sufficient?"

"Certainly!" cried Gerhard. "But I doubt if he will do it."

"Leave that to me!" interrupted Hassel. "Have you seen Betty to-day?"

"No, I have not had a spare hour to-day; but I have prepared a surprise for her."

"What is it? You may tell me; I will not betray your secret."

"Well, I have rented finely located, prettily furnished apartments for Betty and hope she will be pleased. She said the other day she was dissatisfied with her present abode."

"Betty will be delighted when you tell her the news; where are the apartments?"

Gerhard named the street and house.

"I have another reason for not wishing her to remain with you. You know, an aunt of mine lives opposite you, and she has nothing to do but retail

scandal. She would soon discover my frequent visits and inform my father."

Hassel was silent for a moment; he seemed to be pondering over some question.

"Frobel," said he at length, "you must not deceive yourself. Your father will find out soon enough without your aunt's aid that you love my sister, for there are many who delight in betraying others, although it does not benefit them in the least. Should that happen, do you know what you would do?"

"I do not understand your question!" said Gerhard.

"Your father will certainly be displeased. Will you give up and desert my sister, if he so desires?"

"No, I am no longer a child to be commanded. I would elope with Betty before I would give her up."

It was too dark to perceive the satisfied expression which flitted over the bookkeeper's face.

"That is right," said he. "I know your father; he seems to be strict, but is not; he will yield when he sees that you are determined to have your way. Do not allow yourself to be intimidated. Now let us return home, for your father is always vexed if I am not at business in the morning before him."

They separated.

He awoke later than usual the following morning.

Betty awaited him at the table. He glanced closely at the girl's pretty face, which was not so fresh and pleasant as usual; she was evidently put out. What could have ruffled her.

Silently he drank his coffee, silently Betty drank hers.

"What ails you?" he asked at length.

"Nothing," was the curt, but calm reply.

"You are so silent without cause."

"Are you not often so?"

"Certainly, but I have a reason."

"Who has told you that I have not?"

"What is it?"

"You are not usually so sympathetic," said Betty bitterly. "How do I know whether it is sympathy or curiosity? I am vexed because life is so monotonous."

"Well, Frobel told me he would call on you today."

"He is the most tiresome man I know."

Hassel made a pretense of not hearing that remark. "He is coming to tell you that he has rented other apartments for you, because these do not suit you. I want to warn you to be doubly agreeable to him."

"And if I should not be?" asked the girl.

"I desire you to be. You know me," said he, approaching her. "If I hear a complaint about you from Frobel's lips, I will withdraw my support from you and put you out of my house. You know I will keep my word!"

"You will not dare to, because you know that I could tell a great deal," said she. "Or do you think I do not know why you always win when you play with the baron? You have not practiced shuffling the cards at home for nothing."

"Silence!" interrupted her brother. "I do not wish

to hear such words, for I know you will not dare to do it. You must have learned long since that I do not allow myself to be intimidated by anything, but carry out what I have once determined to do. I do not understand your foolish obstinacy; for if you treat Frobel right he will refuse you nothing. I know what it is; you love Gersdorffen and are vexed that he is not more attentive to you. He is an excellent boon companion and knows how to enjoy life, but I do not think he can love any one besides himself. Think no more of him, that is the best way."

"I do not love him," assured the girl, without looking at her brother.

"What a different future can Frobel offer you! He too is frivolous, but his father's wealth is back of him. Will you be pleasant to him?"

Betty hesitated.

"Yes," said she at length. "But answer me one question: are you going to the new apartments?"

"No, I shall remain here."

Betty seemed pleased at the reply.

Why was it so? Was her heart still the baron's, and did she hope to win him easier if she lived alone and was not watched? If Betty lived by herself, he could yet watch her, and he had no idea of giving up his influence over her.

"Now be sensible and do not act against your interest," he repeated. "If you succeed in chaining Frobel to you, your future will be assured."

He left her to go in search of the broker Kronberg.

For years Hassel had been taking money from his

employer, for his salary was not sufficient for his extravagant habits. Up to that time he had succeeded in keeping it secret, but he felt that Gerhard's father must finally find it out. He knew only too well what punishment would be his, but he hoped to escape it through Gerhard. He would not like to see his *fiancee's* brother in prison; he would do all he could to hinder it, and he could, if he represented to his father that Hassel could reveal much that would criminate him. The manufacturer loved his son, and still more his reputation.

When he entered Kronberg's room, he found the broker busy at his desk. Hastily he closed it and rose.

"Do not lock up your treasures; I will not steal them!" cried Hassel jocosely.

"Treasures?" repeated the broker. "I would be a happy man were your words true! Where should a poor broker obtain treasures?"

"Kronberg," continued Hassel, "you need not try to deceive me; you will not succeed. I can easily calculate how much a man must possess who takes in much and expends little, for you have no pleasures. But what do you get out of the money if you save and save and lay by dollar after dollar."

"It gives me pleasure to count over the little I possess. I shall live as I always have."

Hassel shrugged his shoulders.

"Why will you not lend young Frobel any money?" he asked.

"Because I have already given him more than is good for him."

"You need not watch over him?"

"No, but I want to watch over my savings. The young man uses a great deal of money because he has friends who live upon him. It would be a matter of indifference to me; but were he to be in such a position that he could not pay, none of his friends would stand by him!"

"It will never be necessary, for his father is rich."

"If his father would refuse to pay his debts, I should be ruined."

"His father will never do that."

"Do you *know* it?"

"I know Frobel too well."

"Who can see into the future?"

"Notwithstanding, I consider your care absurd. Kronberg, I often do not understand you! We have known one another for years and you know I would not persuade you if there was any risk. Prolong the young man's notes, for they are the safest papers you possess, and Frobel will pay you a few more per cent. But he must not learn that I spoke to you about it. He will come to you to-day; he needs money;—he wants three thousand marks, and you must give them to him!"

Kronberg started at the words.

"Three thousand marks!" he repeated. "Am I a rich man who can shake three thousand marks out of his pocket? I have nothing and will give him nothing!"

Hassel, who up to that time had sat calmly in a chair smoking a ciagr, sprang up impatiently.

"Well, that is enough!" cried he. "You will give Frobel three thousand marks to day!"

"I have not got them!" replied the broker, evading the bookkeeper's glance. "I am not a wealthy man who has so much money laid by."

"Do you think you can deceive me with words?" continued Hassel. "If you have not the money you have enough papers upon which you could raise it within half an hour. You should be grateful to me for helping you to such a good transaction!"

"I can not!" persisted the broker.

"Have you forgotten that I can force you, that I have a note from you which is forged and that you would not escape punishment were I to hand it to the authorities?"

Kronberg did not seem confused by those words.

"The note is several years old," he remarked.

"The *crime* is not yet very old."

"Give it to the authorities—you too will be punished, for you used the note."

Hassel shrugged his shoulders.

"My punishment would be small compared to yours."

The broker for an instant maintained silence.

"Herr Hassel, give me back the note and I will pay you three thousand marks for it!" he then exclaimed.

"Will you?" asked the bookkeeper with a mocking smile.

"Of what use is it to you?" continued Kronberg. "Had I such a paper in my possession and did some

one offer me half its value for it, I should gladly give it up, for I should look upon it as a good transaction!"

"You would not do so, because you are too shrewd!" said Hassel. "You would be the last one to do so, nor will I part with it!"

"And why not?"

"I will tell you. As long as I have the forged check in my hands, you will fear me, and as long as you fear me, you are civil to me. Were I to be in difficulties to-morrow, you would help me because you would have to. Therefore I shall keep the check and you will give Frobel three thousand marks to-day."

"I will give him fifteen hundred," ventured Kronberg.

"Save yourself the trouble of bargaining, for I will not yield one mark. With the high rate of interest you will get, you will be in luck."

"Will I get my interest? If his father should be unfortunate, I would lose the interest as well as the capital."

"What misfortune should befall Frobel's father?"

"Might he not lose his money? Have not wealthier men lost all? Did not the rich Platener take his life, because he lost everything on 'Change?' Who can say: the man is rich and will be rich a year hence?"

"I can say this of Frobel's father, he has not such poor advisers as Platener; had the latter never met you, he would to day be wealthy."

Kronberg shrugged his shoulders.

Hassel left him after repeating that Frobel would call upon him.

XI.

The apartments Gerhard had rented for Hassel's sister were in the same building in which Wenzel lived. Betty took possession of them without Wenzel suspecting that she who had once fascinated him by her pretty face and coquettish manner, lived so near him. Nor did Betty and Hassel know that Wenzel occupied the same house.

Wenzel's happiness had as yet been unbroken, for Johanna knew only one life-duty: to care for him and to make his tiny house as cozy as possible.

One day some friends taunted him with being under his wife's rule to such an extent that he dared not spend an evening with them without permission.

"To prove to you that you are wrong I will go with you!" he exclaimed. "And if you think that my wife will be provoked, you can go with me when I return home this evening."

Wenzel was silent on reaching the restaurant, but the beer soon exorcised all care.

He had been separated from his friends long enough; he had believed that he would not be as happy anywhere as at home; now he discovered his mitake. It seemed as if he were in another world.

Gayly he clinked glasses with his friends.

Before him stood a short man.—Page 132.

The beer had excited his blood, his cheeks glowed, his eyes sparkled.

"I will join you again to-morrow!" said Wenzel. "He is a fool who does not enjoy life. I will enjoy it."

His words were received with cheers; the glasses were refilled and Wenzel drank in order not to betray that the beer had mounted to his brain; it was late when the company disbanded.

When he reached the house in which he lived, it occurred to him that he had no door-key. He attempted to open the door—but in vain.

In order to consider what to do he sat down upon the door-steps; but before he could think, his eyes closed, his head fell forward—sleep had overcome him.

Some time had flown before he was aroused and he started up in affright. Before him stood a short man of about thirty; the small, delicate hand which rested upon Wenzel's shoulder did not seem to be accustomed to work. Indeed they worked, but their labor did not harden them.

The man was Dr. Brand, a scholar, who lived on the fourth floor.

"I startled you," said he to Wenzel. "I saw you asleep, and as I lived in the same house, I will open the door for you. Come!"

He unlocked the door and they entered.

"Ha, ha!" cried the little man laughing at Wenzel's uncertain step. "You will have to accept my aid! Although I am not tall, I have strength enough to hold you."

They ascended the stairs. Johanna, who had heard footsteps, stepped out of their room with a light in her hand. She started when its rays fell upon Wenzel's face and she saw a strange man with him. At the first glance she had divined his condition and her hand trembled, for she had never seen him so; she summoned all her strength to compose herself and not to betray her feelings.

"Your husband forgot the door-key," said Brand, who observed Johanna's glance. "I met him accidentally, and I was pleased to be able to let him in. Good-night!"

He disappeared hastily.

Johanna led Wenzel into the room; she had awaited him a long, long time, but no reproach passed her lips,—she suspected that he had been led astray by acquaintances.

It vexed Wenzel that she did not reproach him; with difficulty he had formed several excuses by which to justify himself, and then he could not even express them.

"I could not come sooner," said he. "I have been having a jolly evening with my friends—and to-morrow evening we are to meet again."

"Karl, you know I never kept you back," said Johanna. "I am glad, too, when you are happy."

"Yes," continued Wenzel. "I would not have allowed you to! I love you very dearly, but a man must not yield too much to his wife."

Johanna knew that he was repeating the words of others; therefore she maintained silence in order not

to provoke him by contradiction, for he scarcely knew himself what he was saying to her.

"You should not have awaited me," began Wenzel again. "I do not like to have you remain up so long! Had my friends known it, they would have ridiculed me."

"I considered it my duty to await you, because you promised me to return," replied Johanna calmly.

"Well, I changed my mind! I have stayed home every evening with you; one must occasionally go out in order not to be forgotten by one's friends. You will not grudge me that?"

A pained expression flitted across the young wife's pale face. Had he changed so suddenly?

"I do not," said she, "therefore I at least deserve no reproaches for having believed your promise. Take from me that faith and you will at once have deprived me of peace and happiness!"

Wenzel looked at her in surprise; he did not know what to reply for he felt that she was right. He passed his hand over his brow as if trying to collect his confused thoughts.

"Go to bed, Karl," said Johanna. "You must be tired. I do not blame you, for I know that you will think differently to-morrow."

"I will think just the same to-morrow!" cried Wenzel, who would yield in nothing; notwithstanding he went to bed.

When he awoke late the following morning his head was dull and heavy. Fortunately it was Sunday and he was not obliged to go to the factory. He

could remember very little of what had happened the evening before. What he had said to Johanna he had forgotten. He could hear her preparing coffee in the adjoining room—was she vexed with him because he had returned home in such a condition? She had no right to be, for it was the first time she had seen him so.

Angry with himself and ill-humored without knowing the reason, he at length arose. With a half-abashed, half-venturesome air he entered the room in which Johanna was busy, and he breathed more freely when his wife advanced to meet him as pleasantly as usual. He extended his hand and she took it; yet it seemed to him as if her eyes were sad.

She did not mention what had occurred the previous night; she did not even ask the name of the little man who had brought him home. Wenzel told it to her.

"A short while since I read a pamphlet on the labor question," he added. "It pleased me very much, for it was liberal and entirely on our side—I should like to know if the little man wrote it."

"Why not ask him?" suggested Johanna. "Can you not do so to-day? You need only call upon him to thank him for the service he rendered you."

"You are right!" cried Wenzel. "I will thank him and at the same time tell him how it happened that I returned home so late."

On reaching Doctor Brand's door, Wenzel paused; the room was quiet. Was the little student asleep? Almost shyly he tapped at the door and the reply was barely audible: "Come in!"

He entered. In the tiny room whose table and chairs were covered with books, he saw the doctor sitting at a writing-desk; he merely turned his head as if the interruption were not very pleasant.

"What is it?" asked Brand, without rising from his seat.

"I wanted to thank you for your kindness in opening the door for me last night," replied Wenzel

Brand then recognized him and rose hastily.

"Ah, it is *you!*" he exclaimed, offering Wenzel his hands. "Thanks are unnecessary, for the service I rendered you is not worth speaking of; still I am pleased that you came and that I shall have an opportunity of becoming better acquainted with you."

He cleared the books and papers from a small sofa that Wenzel might sit down.

The latter glanced around the room, which wore an almost poverty-stricken air.

"I am sorry that you saw me in such a condition," said he. "A few friends accidentally—"

"Cease—cease!" interrupted Brand with a smile. "Do you not know the old song: 'He who has never been tipsy?' . . . I am of the opinion that he who works hard day after day should consider it his duty to do so. I know you are a workingman. You see, they always charge them with indulging in too many and too extravagant pleasures; they require them to be diligent, economical and modest in their wants; they say to them: You should be glad to have a living; think constantly of the future! You do not need enjoyment; you have no money for it! If you

earn three marks a day and save fifty pence, in a year you will have one hundred and eighty marks, and that is a small capital for you, not alone in case of illness, but too if you wish to rise higher and to become independent! It can not be denied that the calculation is quite correct—and yet it is not! You look at me in astonishment, my words seem to you contradictory,—pray, listen to me a moment. I concede, that a workingman, if he denies himself every pleasure and lives economically, can save, even if his wages be small; but what he gains in that way, he loses in another, in his love of work and his energy and disposition. Deny yourself every pleasure for one year, you will save money; but you will become as a machine which goes systematically about its work, and can be used for only one purpose. You will never be anything more. Is it not so?"

Wenzel was forced to agree with him, his words were convincing.

"You see," continued the doctor, whose face had assumed a different expression, "the love of work is strengthened by enjoyment, the courage is sustained. Am I not right?"

He spoke rapidly and enthusiastically. The truths which lay in his words sounded so enticing. Wenzel had at first been ashamed that Brand had seen him in a state of intoxication; it now seemed to him not only allowable, but essential.

"Yes, you are right, Doctor!" cried he. "And now, permit me to ask one question: Did you write the pamphlet on the workingman?"

"Yes. Have you read it?"

"Certainly!"

"How did you like it?"

"Very much indeed! If I could write—I would write just that way!" replied Wenzel.

The student's short form seemed to grow; his eyes gleamed.

"I am glad of that!" he said. "Now we are no longer strangers, and shall understand one another better, for you know, that I am on the workingmen's side, and will stand by them in any case! This work has given me much pleasure and made many enemies for me!"

"Are you married?" asked Wenzel.

"I married?" repeated the little man in astonishment. "My friend, I can have no wife and family; they would hinder me in the accomplishment of my object. I look upon myself as the workingman's apostle; my task is to stir them up that they may recognize their strength and power, and cease to be machines and tools in the hands of others. Because I am a student, the workingmen have no confidence in me, and yet I sacrifice myself for them. I have already won over to my ideas a small circle of men of that class; will you join them? Were you to speak to others, they would listen to you in preference to me. Have you the courage to do so? That you are capable of it, your intelligent glance betrays."

With great attention Wenzel listened to the enthusiastic words; his cheeks glowed, his blood coursed more rapidly through his veins.

"I have the courage to stand by your side and to help you!" cried he in agitation. "Count upon me, I will struggle with you!"

Doctor Brand's eyes beamed; but he suppressed his delight.

"I believe and trust you; but before you bind yourself, I wish to call your attention to one thing," said he. "He who gives me his word is in honor bound by it."

"You can depend on me, I will not draw back!" assured Wenzel.

"Nor can I conceal from you the fact that the task we have on hand requires work and even self-denial. The calm, quiet life you have hitherto led, will end; you will enter upon a more exciting future—are you prepared to do so under these conditions?"

"Yes!" said Wenzel in a firm voice. How much he promised, he did not himself know.

"Then shake hands!" cried Brand, holding out his right hand. "We will keep together, because I feel that we belong together. He who wishes to accomplish great things can do so; a firm will is the mightiest power! We will triumph! Let our watchword be: *Forward! Forward!* Our aim is lofty; we will have to climb the heights—but we shall succeed!"

XII.

A life of excitement began for Wenzel. Almost every evening he spent with Brand, and the man so far superior to him in intelligence exercised a great influence over him.

Where were the peaceful, happy evenings on which Johanna had awaited Wenzel at a certain hour, on which he remained with her, seated beside her, talking or reading aloud?

She had assured him that she was happier than she had ever dreamed of being, that she had never wished for a return of her earlier life, and that she was perfectly contented in her home.

For some time Johanna bore his neglect of her in silence, finally she looked upon it as her duty to tell him frankly that he was taking a dangerous course.

"You are destroying our happiness and your future," she added. "What change has taken place in you! The happy evenings which formerly satisfied you? you no longer delight in. Karl, you are forgetting that you have a wife, that I too have a claim upon you, and that you are becoming estranged from your own hearth. Do not undermine your peace of mind!"

Wenzel felt that Johanna was right; he could and dared not acknowledge it to her.

"You misunderstand me," he replied. "My love

for you is the same, but other duties have arisen. A man can not belong to his family alone, because life makes demands upon him. You do not know what value Doctor Brand attaches to my opinions. I should be betraying our common interests, were I to withdraw now."

A mournful smile flitted across the young wife's pale face.

"Karl, Doctor Brand is your misfortune!" said she.

Those words irritated Wenzel, for he respected the little scholar and was prepared at any moment to swear to his words.

"I do not understand you, Johanna!" he returned. "Do you not think Brand honorable? He sacrifices himself to his ideas. He works and struggles for us, he wishes to gain for us a future, and to win the victory for our just cause would sacrifice his life!"

"I think him honorable, yes, I know that he is!" calmly replied his wife. "But, Karl, he is an enthusiast, and when possessed by one idea, a fanatic! Just because he believes so firmly in the truth of his ideas is he dangerous, for that faith inspires him to draw with him many others."

"He is no fanatic!" cried Wenzel warmly. "We do not desire to be longer the slaves of the wealthy who take advantage of us, who roll in the lap of luxury while the workingmen suffer!"

"Karl, you do not suffer" interpolated Johanna. "We were happy until you met Brand and his friends, until they scattered the seed of discontent in your breast. What you earn serves us for our needs.

You have even saved. You entered Frobel's factory voluntarily; he pays you for your work, he can not force you to remain with him,—you can leave to-day if you want to,—are you then a slave?"

"Johanna, you do not understand, so you are not capable of judging," replied Wenzel. "We *are* slaves! Were I to leave Frobel to-day, I should to-morrow have to seek work in another factory in order to earn a livelihood. Is it not the same if we depend upon one man or another? They have only the one aim: to enrich themselves through us."

"Then you might as well say: Frobel is the slave of his men. Were you to leave him to-day, he would be obliged to seek other workmen to-morrow in order to sustain his business, for by it he earns his bread."

"He is rich enough without his factory."

"That remark is not correct," continued Johanna. "You yourself have told me that he earned his fortune in that way, and there are thousands of manufacturers who have not fortunes, who have to live by their work as well as you by yours."

"They earn a hundred times as much as those who work for them."

"And if they do so, are not their cares greater?"

Wenzel felt that his wife's arguments were such that it would be difficult to combat them.

"You defend the manufacturers and employers against the just claims of the workingmen? to whom your husband belongs!" he exclaimed. "You place yourself upon their side, while I hoped that you would stand by me. Is not my interest nearer to you? I almost believe the contrary."

A pained expression lurked about the young wife's lips.

"Karl, have I merited that reproach?" she asked. "Since I have been yours, I have had no other interest than yours; all my thoughts have been centered upon you. Because I see you in company which will bring you misfortune, I should like to separate you from it; I am frank with you, for I consider it my duty. You are pursuing a phantom which you will never grasp!"

Wenzel paced the small room in the effort to suppress his agitation.

"You do not understand me or you would see that my one aim is to better the condition of the workingman," said he at length. "I wish to enjoy the fruits of my labor, I wish to earn more in order to make your life easier and pleasanter. I am thinking of you and you undervalue my efforts."

Johanna's loving eyes rested upon her husband. Not for a moment had she doubted that his aim sprang from a noble source, for his heart was good; what grieved her was that he had taken the wrong course, that he had allowed others to lead him astray. He was blinded and did not know it.

She approached him and laid her hand upon his arm.

"Karl, have you ever noticed that I was dissatisfied? I am not. Were you to overwhelm me with riches and thereby to become estranged from your home and me, what would I gain? Are you not already estranged? Do not meetings engage you so

entirely that you forget me? The evenings you spend with me are very rare, and when you are with me, I notice that you are uneasy, that your thoughts are busy with other places and people."

"It will be different as soon as we have accomplished our purpose," said Wenzel. "I belong to the leaders of those who desire to improve the laborer's condition and wish to free them from degrading bondage; I can not therefore withdraw. It would be called cowardly, and must not be."

"It *will* be different," repeated Johanna, half to herself. "He who once weans himself from his own domesticity never finds contentment therein."

Those words did not sound like a reproach, but like a mournful admonition. They touched Wenzel's heart, and he was forced to confess to himself that he had of late left Johanna too much alone.

"I can not remain with you to-night; there is to be a meeting at which I must be present; moreover I promised to come," he said. "I will come back as soon as possible," continued Wenzel, approaching his wife.

He extended his hand to her and without anger, with a grateful glance Johanna laid her right hand within it. When he descended the stairs he could not forget his wife's words. He recalled her grateful glance when he promised to return soon. She was alone in the tiny room; how delighted she would be were he to return at once! He had promised to attend the meeting, but might he not excuse himself through Brand, in whose room a light was still burning?

He was already on the street when he turned back and ascended the stairs to Brand's apartments.

Frankly he told the little man that he could not go to the meeting and he must excuse him.

"Why can you not go?" asked Brand calmly.

"I want to spend the evening with my wife," was Wenzel's reply.

"Is that your true reason?"

"Yes."

Doctor Brand rose and his brows contracted.

"So our cause is not more serious to you?" cried he in a sharp, bitter voice. "You wish to belong to the leaders and therefore remain away from a meeting upon which so much depends, in order to stay with your wife? Ha, ha! Had any one else said that of you, I would have laughed at him, for I had a better opinion of you So that is the courage of which you have so often boasted, that your assurance of sacrificing everything to our cause"

"I do not lack courage, but I feel it my duty not to entirely neglect my wife," replied Wenzel, half confused, half vexed, at Brand's harsh words.

"Well, then remain away," continued Brand. "I will tell our friends you could not come, because you had to or wanted to stay with your wife. But do not be surprised if the confidence you have up to this time won, should disappear, if they say of you, you could not come because your wife would not allow it."

"No one will dare to say so," cried Wenzel starting up.

"Can you prevent it being said behind your back? Wenzel, I mean well, because I like you and know that you are valuable to our cause. Did I not tell you before you promised to aid me, that you would be called upon to make sacrifices; you say you do not wish to neglect your wife; your time is too precious to be wasted. The leader of a great cause can not sit at home and rock children, he must go out into the world."

"I will go with you!" cried Wenzel, for Brand's words had their effect upon him.

"I knew you would do so, and that your decision was only called forth by a momentary impulse," continued the little man more calmly. "Be a man and remain steadfast only a short time, our goal is coming near. Daily we are gaining in numbers, our power increases hourly! Do not be abashed by anything! Now your wife may complain, but soon—soon we will triumph. Later on, you can devote yourself to her. Now come to the meeting!"

Wenzel obeyed, and when they reached the place of meeting, when acquaintances advanced and greeted him, when glasses were held towards him and the beer made his blood course rapidly through his veins, he no longer thought of his wife who sat at home alone!

In the meantime Johanna sat in her tiny room; the grieved look had disappeared from her features; her cheeks were flushed; in her large, dark eyes glowed a tender light. She was making garments for the tiny being whose advent she anticipated and

which caused her heart to beat more quickly and joyfully.

Would not the bond between herself and her husband be drawn together more closely, would not the helpless creature before it could speak, call to him: Remain at home! I have a claim upon your love and your care!

A new life would begin for her. She would not be alone; all day she would have a dear being near her for whom she could care, whom she could press to her breast.

It was late when she laid aside her sewing and looked at the clock. The sad expression returned, for Wenzel had promised to come back early, and it was not far from midnight.

She rose, fetched ink, pen and paper, in order to inform Ina of the happiness she anticipated; to her friend she could confide all.

XIII

Gerhard's relations with Hassel and his sister became more and more intimate, for the wily bookkeeper had gained great power over the frivolous, credulous young man by flattering his vanity in every possible way.

Betty suffered his attentions because he overwhelmed her with gifts and made it possible for her to lead a life of idleness. She did not love Gerhard, because her heart beat in secret for the baron; only because her brother required it and she was accustomed to obeying him, was she agreeable to Frobel.

Of the three thousand marks he had received from Kronberg, Gerhard had nothing left; Hassel had assisted him in borrowing more, and that too had been squandered by extravagant living; Gerhard scattered the money broadcast and Hassel knew how to manage it, so that a large share fell to him.

Gerhard's father had no suspicion of his actions. He was to learn of it from a source of which he had never dreamed.

He had written his daughter decisively that he would send her no more money, and she was so much the more indignant as she had heard the reports of Gerhard's dissipations. With her consent her husband repaired to the capital to secretly inquire into

Gerhard's doings, and he had developed extraordinary talent in that direction.

When he had collected sufficient proofs, he repaired with them to his father-in-law. Frobel was very much surprised when he entered his office, and received him coldly, of which treatment he seemed unaware.

When common civilities were exchanged, the subject of Engeline's letter was broached by Frobel, who said: "Engeline has written to me several times, but I could not grant her request. She surely can not complain that I have been hard with her, but kindness too, has its limits. Were she still in my home, I would naturally provide for her; now I can not do so altogether,—she should know that."

Halben shrugged his shoulders.

"Luck has been against me," he observed. "But what has happened can not be helped. Engeline would not have been so grieved at your refusal, had she not known that her brother had squandered larger sums and purposely avoided all work which you might easily find for him to do."

"Gerhard causes me sorrow enough by his mode of life," said the father, "all my efforts to induce him to work have been vain; but on one point Engeline is mistaken; I have sent her far more money than I have given Gerhard."

A smile flitted across Halben's face.

"Then you do not know the life your son leads," said he. "You do not know what sums of money he flings away?"

"I know, for they come out of my pocket," replied the manufacturer bitterly.

"I believe that what you give him is only a small share of what he wastes."

Frobel gazed at Halben in surprise.

"I do not understand you," said he.

"I mean that the debts which Gerhard makes are considerably larger," returned Halben with composure.

"He promised me to contract no more debts, because I threatened not to pay them; I hope he has not broken his promise and deceived me."

Halben smiled mockingly and that smile betrayed that he knew more than he wanted to say.

The smile did not escape Frobel.

"You know more!" he cried.

"I did not come to betray Engeline's brother," said Halben evasively, while at the same time confirmation lay in his words.

"It is your duty to tell me all," continued the manufacturer. "If Gerhard has deceived me, I will act accordingly. I might have perhaps done so sooner, but I hoped he would change."

Halben still hesitated.

"I can only speak plainly on one condition," said he.

"And that is?"

"Promise me to speak to no one, least of all to Gerhard, of what I shall tell you, until you have been convinced of the truth yourself!"

"I promise!"

"Gerhard has fallen in with bad companions, who seem to take advantage of his inexperience. He gambles and invariably loses; he does not seem to see that he is probably being cheated."

"Can you prove that to me?" interrupted Frobel with agitation.

"Pray, hear me first! Such a life as Gerhard leads is expensive. He has therefore many debts; I do not know their amount, only Moses Kronberg can tell you, for from him he obtained the money."

"He sank so low that he borrowed money from that man!" cried Frobel bitterly. "Do you know it positively?"

"You can convince yourself of the truth of my information. If I may be permitted to give you a piece of advice, I would tell you to say to Kronberg that you will not pay a mark if he does not confess all frankly to you; for it is possible that Gerhard has enjoined silence and has promised him money later on."

"When I am dead and he can squander the fortune which I have earned by toil and industry?" interpolated Frobel.

"That I do not know," replied Halben, who saw with satisfaction the effect of his words. "Bind the broker to silence, for I should like you to be yourself convinced of the truth of other facts. Gerhard has a mistress whom he supports in grand style; he has rented a fine suite of apartments for her and provides entirely for her comfort.

"What is her name?" interrupted Frobel.

"She is your bookkeeper's sister."

"Hassel's? Impossible!"

"It is so! Gerhard is very intimate with the man who seems to be his tempter."

Frobel paced the floor; he could find no words in which to express his indignation.

"I will drive the fellow away at once!" cried he at length. "So far—so far has my son forgotten himself!"

"You promised me to convince yourself of the truth first," said Halben. "I therefore pray you to conceal your righteous anger to-day. This evening Hassel's sister will celebrate her birthday. Gerhard has invited his friends to celebrate it and has ordered a fine champagne supper. The birthday *fete* will take place in the lady's apartments and this evening you can meet there the entire circle in which Gerhard moves."

"And Gerhard?"

"He will surely not be absent."

"Halben!" cried Frobel, pausing before his son-in-law. "If what you have told me is true, you can ask any favor of me; if it is not—I shall require satisfaction for this calumny."

After having again impressed upon his father-in-law the necessity of withholding his part in the affair, Halben left him.

When he was alone, Frobel could not forget Halben's words. Was it possible that Gerhard had sunk so low? He left the factory in order not to meet Hassel for he feared that at the sight of the man he might not be able to control himself, and Halben's

request that he should assure himself of the truth of his information before he spoke of it, seemed reasonable to him.

He walked through several streets in order to regain his composure; then he repaired to Kronberg. His hand trembled, when he knocked at the door. He knew the man and his character; he would have shown him the door had he entered his house,—and now he was going to him himself.

The broker sprang up in surprise when he saw Frobel enter, and bowed in the most servile manner.

"Ah! what an honor, Herr Frobel!" cried he. "I did not dream that my threshold would ever be honored by your feet; be kind enough to take a seat!"

Frobel seemed scarcely to hear the words; at least he did not notice them.

"I have a few questions to put to you, and I expect to hear the whole truth from you," said he.

"Would I dare to tell you an untruth?" replied the broker. "Should you say of me: Kronberg is not an honorable man? Is it not a duty for an honest man to tell the truth?"

"Did you lend my son money?" asked Frobel.

Kronberg hesitated a moment. Was it wise to tell the whole truth in that case? He considered quickly. If Frobel desired to know about his son's debts, what other object could he have than to pay them?

"Your son came to me and wanted money," he replied. "Lord, thought I, the young gentleman must be embarrassed; he wants to save his father some trouble, and if you do not give him the money, he

will perhaps go to some one else and fall into bad hands. I therefore gave it to him, because I knew he had an honorable father who would not desert his son!"

"What if I should not pay?" cried Frobel.

"You will pay, Herr Frobel; you are honorable and wealthy."

"How large is the sum you loaned my son?" asked Frobel.

Kronberg shrugged his shoulders.

"I can not remember! The young gentleman came often—what could I do?"

"What security did my son give you? For without any you would have loaned him no money."

"Would it have been business-like to have done so? I am a poor man and must take care of the little I have saved. Your son gave me notes."

"Show them to me!"

"Will you take them up?" asked Kronberg, glancing slyly at Frobel.

"Show me the notes, the rest can be arranged afterwards," cried the latter impatiently.

Kronberg stepped to his desk and fetched the papers. Frobel tried to maintain his composure and yet his hand trembled when he received them. The blood left his cheeks as his eyes fell upon the figures. It was scarcely possible that Gerhard could have spent such an amount, and yet the note bore his signature.

Frobel was not bound to pay the notes, but the broker might sue Gerhard and his disgrace would then be made public.

"Come to me to-morrow with the notes," said he at length. "But one condition I impose. Tell no one of this; nor must you tell my son to-day that I was here, that I know of this matter. If you do not fulfil these conditions to the letter, you will not receive a mark from me."

The broker's eyes glittered.

"I will be silent," he replied. "You shall say that Kronberg keeps his promise."

"One thing more. Where did you meet my son?"

The broker shrugged his shoulders.

"I do not know where I had the honor."

"Did my son come to you alone at first?"

The broker's reply was evasive.

"I must know the truth!" cried Frobel impatiently. "Try to deceive me and you will gain nothing."

"A gentleman came with him."

"Who?" exclaimed Frobel.

"Your bookkeeper!"

"Did you know him?"

"I know many people in town, I have lived there a long time and meet many."

"You paid Hassel for bringing my son to you?" cried Frobel.

Kronberg's eyes fell, he did not seem to relish the fact that the manufacturer should have seen through his scheme.

"For what should I pay him?" he replied. "If I lend any one money, I grant him a favor, he does not grant me one. I would have loaned your son money had not Hassel come with him! Of what use

was the bookkeeper to me? Would he be able to pay the note if you could not? What do I care for Hassel? Nothing, I say, nothing!"

Frobel made no reply, but left the room.

In the evening Halben was seated in the wine-vault, where he had appointed a meeting with his father-in-law. He had written Engeline a few hasty lines when Frobel entered the room. His face was moody and sad.

Halben hastened to meet him.

"Well," he asked, as he led the way to the table at which he had been seated, "have you already made inquiries?"

"I was at Kronberg's," said Frobel calmly.

"Did I exaggerate?"

"No, no. On the contrary," cried the manufacturer, "Gerhard has deceived me in the most shameful manner."

"Shall you pay his debts?" asked Halben.

"Yes."

"I do not think you are obliged to."

"Shall I let the broker sue him and make it public? My name has always been unsullied; and now my son must bring disgrace upon it."

"No one can blame you for that!" remarked Halben.

"Yes, yes, they can! I blame myself for having been too weak with Gerhard. He has abused my kindness. Now it is high time to be strict with him and—I shall be!"

"Do not form any decision to-day." warned Halben.

"To-morrow you will be calmer. I told you as well that Gerhard has a mistress whom he provides with every luxury, that this evening he will celebrate her birthday in a brilliant manner. I would be pleased if you would yourself prove the truth of my words. To-morrow Gerhard will deny all, and I do not wish to be looked upon as a liar."

"I will do so!" cried Frobel. "It will be difficult for me, and I do not yet know if my strength will hold out."

"You must control yourself, and you will do so, because you owe it to yourself. You are agitated now. Come, drink a glass of wine with me; that will calm and strengthen you."

Frobel seated himself and hastily drained his glass of its contents. After drinking several, he felt somewhat more relieved.

"Come with me," said he.

"Spare me that," besought Halben. "Gerhard would at once divine that I led you thither."

"Then I will go alone!" cried Frobel, rising. "The wine had inspired him with new courage. "We shall meet again to-morrow," he added, extending his hand to his son-in-law.

Halben remained in the vault and ordered another bottle of wine; all seemed to be going according to his wishes, for Frobel's excitement assured him that he would not be too forgiving.

XIV.

In Betty's apartments all was very merry. Glasses were clinked and the sound of loud voices betrayed that the wine had already accomplished its work. At a table covered with food and wine-bottles sat Betty and Gerhard, Hassel, the baron, Dr. Russel and von Bursten.

On a flower-bedecked table at the window lay the elegant gifts with which Gerhard had that morning surprised Betty,—silks and costly jewels. Those gifts had put Betty in the gayest of moods; she was exceptionally affable towards Gerhard, whose eyes gleamed triumphantly.

The master of the house, who as usual served as a butt for the company assembled, was called upon for a speech. After much urging he began in an unsteady voice: "Gentlemen and ladies—"

"There is only one lady present!" interrupted Russel.

"Silence, do not interrupt!" cried the baron.

"Gentlemen and ladies," again began von Bursten. "I am indeed pleased—" he hesitated. "Yes, I am indeed pleased—" he paused again and looked around him in confusion.

At what he was pleased, he seemed to have entirely forgotten. Again he passed his hand over his brow

"I too will be there!" he thundered, as he advanced hastily to Gerhard, and laid his hand upon his shoulder.—Page 160.

upon which were large drops of perspiration, then he sat down and emptied his glass after the exertion.

All present burst into laughter.

"Bursten, you are a second Mirabeau!" cried Doctor Russel. "I did not think that of you. If you have that speech printed, I will buy a hundred copies!"

Speeches then became the order of the day.

The baron rose and drank the health of their hostess; he was followed by Gerhard.

"Dear friends!" he began. "I have never been so happy as on this evening, and am really sorry that Betty was ever born. But that unfortunate circumstance is mitigated somewhat by the fact that we celebrate this birthday oftener in the year, and I hope that you will all accept my invitation to those celebrations."

A loud "bravo" interrupted him.

"Frobel, you are a fine fellow!" cried Doctor Russel. "We will all be there!"

All eyes were fastened on Gerhard and no one noticed that the latter's father entered the door softly.

Frobel's face turned pale as he saw the company, and his blood almost ceased flowing when he heard his son's words.

"I too will be there!" he thundered, as he advanced hastily to Gerhard and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

With a start Gerhard cried:

"Father!" as if a ghost were before him.

Those present sprang up.

"Yes, I too will be there!" repeated Frobel. "Or

do you perhaps think such company is unfit for me?"

The baron was insulted by those words. At Frobel's sudden entrance, he too rose in surprise.

"Who is the man who dares to force himself into our circle?" cried he, putting down his glass and staring at Frobel.

Frobel heard the words; they inflamed his anger still more.

"I will tell you!" cried he, stepping up to the baron. "I am the father whose son has fallen into bad company, and who has come to take him from the same."

The baron involuntarily drew back.

"I would demand satisfaction of you, were you able to give it to me," he replied, with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders. "But with people of your degree one does not fight."

Frobel drew himself up.

"Silence!" he exclaimed, in a loud and commanding voice. "If I did not think it would soil my hands, I would give you the merited reply."

"Father!" cried Gerhard, forcing his way between them, in order to prevent any further conversation.

"Back!" cried Frobel violently, pushing his son aside. "I will speak with you later!"

"Frobel!" said the baron to Gerhard. "A family scene seems about to be enacted. I am surely superfluous,—and I do not like them either."

He took his hat and with a haughty glance at the manufacturer, left the room.

"Come with me at once!" said the latter, turning to his son and speaking in a commanding voice.

The tone vexed Gerhard; he was no longer a child. He would have liked to return a violent reply, but he controlled himself and maintained silence.

"Well," continued Frobel, "you do not seem to have heard my words! I think it is high time that I should take you from this company."

"No, I will not go!" replied Gerhard defiantly.

"You will not?" said Frobel. "Will you force me to exercise my authority here? You have paid for these apartments with my money, so they belong to me."

"They are this lady's rooms," said Gerhard, pointing to Betty, who had flown to her brother's side.

The manufacturer cast a hasty and threatening glance at the girl and his bookkeeper. He had bitter words upon his tongue, but restrained them.

"You will follow me!" said he resolutely.

"Go—go!" whispered Hassel to Gerhard, who hesitated.

"We will meet again to-morrow!" cried Gerhard to Betty, then he followed his father.

When Frobel and his son had gone, Betty cast herself into a chair, the other guests departed, and brother and sister were alone.

Hassel paced the room in agitation, for he needed no longer to conceal the fact of how anxious he was. One glance which Frobel had cast upon him, told him what he had to expect.

"Gerhard should not have gone with his father,"

said Betty at length. "I expected him to be more brave and independent."

"What should he do?" said Hassel, without pausing in his walk. "Is he independent? He only lives upon his father's pocket and on the debts he has made. I know Frobel; it was the highest sense to obey him, for when he is angry he has no control over himself."

Betty looked anxiously at her brother, for his uneasiness struck her.

"Edward, I fear that you will lose your position at Frobel's, if he learns that you have led Gerhard into such frivolity."

The bookkeeper glanced at her mockingly.

"You are afraid?" repeated he. "I can assure you that I will loose it!"

"What will you do then?" continued Betty.

Hassel replied evasively.

"Did I not live before I had the position?"

The thought troubled him very little; another fear oppressed him. His gay life, the cost of which Gerhard had always borne, was at an end, and he could scarcely hope that his dishonesty would be longer concealed. If Frobel discovered it, could he not have him arrested? Involuntarily he started at the thought of the prison; then he sought to forget it. Matters had not gone so far yet; might not his shrewd head devise some means of escape?

"I am far more anxious about you," he continued. "Gerhard will have to give you up, for I do not think he has sufficient strength of character to oppose his

father's wishes. Frobel will be still angrier when he learns what debts his son has made."

"I shall not grieve very much over Gerhard's loss," said Betty.

"Be still!" interrupted Hassel angrily. "I do not want to hear such silly words! Is the life which Gerhard provides for you of no value to you? Did you not always gladly accept his gifts? What will you do if Frobel has you put out of these apartments tomorrow?"

"Gerhard rented them for me, and gave them to me," said Betty, "I can not be forcibly ejected."

"You are a child, who does not know what is right and what wrong," continued Hassel. "Gerhard has rented the rooms in his name, therefore they belong to him. If his father forces him to drive you out, you will have to go, or else he will call in the aid of the police."

"He will never do that, for he loves me!"

"But his father will; you may consider yourself fortunate if his anger does not fall upon you."

"I am not afraid of it," said Betty.

Hassel did not seem to hear those word, for his anger had already taken another turn.

"It is incomprehensible to me where Frobel could have learned that you lived here and that Gerhard rented these rooms for you," said he. "Did you write to Gerhard? The letter might possibly have fallen into his father's hands."

"I have never written to him. Why should I. He came to see me daily. Might not Frobel have heard through another that I live here?"

"Through whom? Only our friends know it, and from them no one heard it."

"Might not Wenzel, who lives in the house, have told him?"

"Who?" asked Hassel, raising his head, as if he had not heard the name.

"Wenzel."

"You say he lives here?"

"Yes."

"And you just tell me of it?"

"I only discovered it a few days since, when I accidentally saw him standing at the window; his wife was with him."

"Does he know that you live here?"

"I do not know; but I do not doubt it, for his wife is always at home, and probably knows all that is going on."

"Then surely he told of it!" cried Hassel. "The fellow has thwarted my plans for the second time; let him beware if I meet him!"

He drank one more glass of champagne and left the room.

He entered a restaurant, there to spend the remainder of the evening and to dispel all care.

The following morning Frobel repaired to his factory early, took the books which Hassel had kept into his room and locked the door in order not to be disturbed. For hours he sat there; at length he found what he was in search of.

Leaving the books open, he sprang up and hastened to the door to call Hassel. He had his hand upon

the knob when he paused. He felt that at that moment he was too excited to go through the scene he knew awaited him. He seated himself upon the sofa in order to gather all his strength. Finally he rose, opened the door and called his bookkeeper.

With apparent composure Hassel entered.

Bitterly, silently Frobel glanced for several seconds at the man who came into the room. That his fault was discovered he knew. In order to go through with what lay before him, he must summon all his strength to his aid.

Frobel, too, essayed to maintain his composure.

"You have not entered the receipt of five hundred marks in the books," said he, "where is the money?"

For a moment Hassel was silent; his lips moved; it was difficult for him to confess his guilt.

"Do you deny that you have kept the money?" continued Frobel with excitement. "Are you bold enough to tell me to my face that you did not do so, when I can prove it to you and when you cannot plead neglect? Dare you?"

"I don't deny my fault," said Hassel in reply.

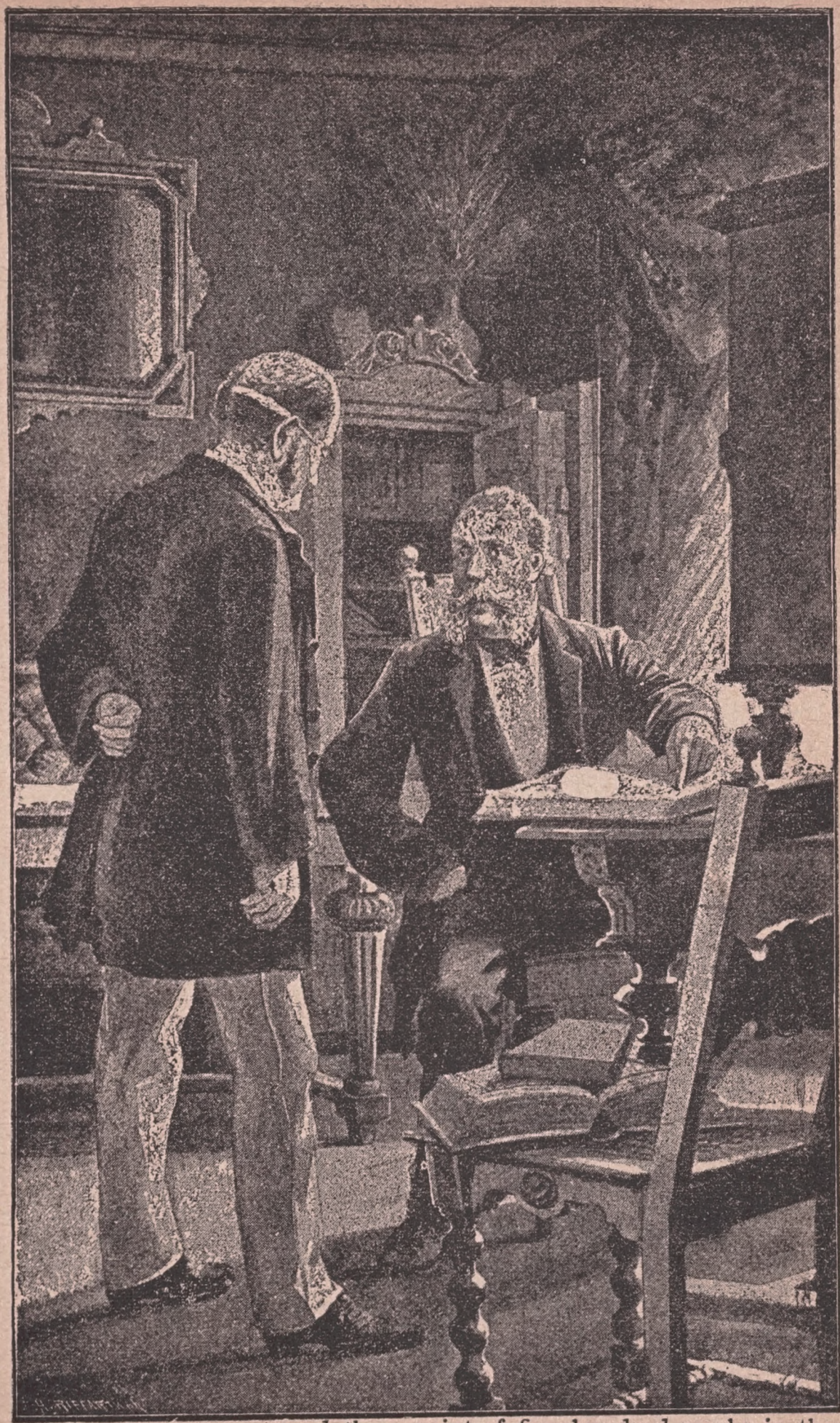
"Ah!" exclaimed Frobel, surprised at the frank avowal. "You confess it?"

"Yes."

"And you used the money for yourself!"

"I did."

"It is sufficient to deliver you into the hands of the law and it shall be done!" cried Frobel, whose composure and self-possession were disappearing. "I put faith in you and you abused it in the most shameful



"You have not entered the receipt of five hundred marks in the book," said he, pointing to the book, "where is the money?"—Page 166.

manner. You have done more than that, you led my son astray. That I can and will not pardon; you shall learn how severe I can be; I will have you arrested at once!"

He turned towards the bell.

Hastily Hassel stepped in front of him.

"Herr Frobel," said he, and his voice trembled with excitement, for he had not anticipated such rapid and prompt action, "I have something more to say to you before you have me arrested. I pray you, listen to me!"

The manufacturer stood still.

"What have you to say to me?" cried he.

"I have acknowledged that I took the money and used it for myself," continued Hassel. "You have the right to punish my crime, and yet I should like to ask you not to do so."

"You dare to ask me that?" interrupted Frobel angrily. "You hope for pity from me, you, who could not have treated me more shamefully if I had been your enemy? You can at least not count upon forbearance!"

"And yet I think you will regret your determination!" said Hassel.

"Wait and see!" exclaimed Frobel, again seizing the bell-cord.

"Then I will tell you this," remarked Hassel, and about his mouth hovered a malicious smile, "that I have been through a great deal with your son which would not bear publicity, because it would bring discredit upon his and your name; I shall tell it all in court, for I care little for *my* name."

Involuntarily Frobel started; his eyes rested upon the pale, dissipated features of the bookkeeper, who seemed to him like a demon.

Hassel did not fail to perceive the impression which his words called forth. He took advantage of it.

"Do you think I am not able to make your son's stay in town an impossibility?" he continued. "You can prevent it, Herr Frobel; if you do not expose me, I will be silent," said Hassel.

Frobel underwent a severe struggle with himself. It was difficult for him to decide, but finally love for his son conquered.

"How can I be certain that you will do so?" he cried.

"I give you my word," returned the bookkeeper.

"I do not believe you; you deceived me too shamefully."

"My own interest requires that I do so."

"Your interest?" repeated the manufacturer. "What have you to lose? But I will not give you to the law; I will do so, however, when you break your word. The way lies open to me always, and the second time I will exercise no clemency. The proof of your guilt is in the book. Now go, go, for were I to see you longer I might regret my decision!" cried Frobel, pointing to the door. "One thing I will add: enter these rooms again, and I will have you ejected!"

"I have nothing more to do here," said Hassel, with a mocking smile. He was perfectly satisfied with that issue; for that he would lose his position, he had known from the beginning.

He fetched his hat and cane in order to leave the factory.

He met Wenzel. The sight of him drove the blood to Hassel's face; he drew near him and cried with a threatening gesture:

"We have a reckoning to settle. And we will settle it." Then he passed on.

In astonishment Wenzel looked after him, for he did not understand him, still less did he suspect whither he was going in such haste.

Frobel remained in his room and sought to compose himself. At length he left the office and repaired to the hotel at which Halben was stopping.

He found his son-in-law at home, and told him what had happened.

"What shall you now do with Gerhard?"

"I shall send him to a friend of mine at M— named Borger, who is an excellent man, and who will take him into his warehouse and his family. He has a son too, who, I hope, will have good influence upon Gerhard. I hope that when Gerhard forms other ties he will see that he would have ruined himself had he continued his mode of life."

Frobel seized his son-in-law's hand.

"I owe you many thanks!" cried he. "Had you not opened my eyes, Gerhard would probably have been ruined; now I hope yet to save him and I thank you for it. I shall go to M— to-day with Gerhard; as soon as I return, I will write to Engeline. Let me know if you have obtained the position you have in prospect. Give this to Engeline!"

He handed Halben a sealed envelope, which he divined contained bank-notes.

In the friendliest manner the men parted, the men who had always been enemies.

XV.

The joy which Johanna had anticipated seemed to be fulfilled. When Wenzel saw for the first time the tiny being she had borne him, his eyes glowed with love.

She could have had no more faithful nurse than her husband. He remained with her day and night.

By the child's birth Wenzel's love seemed to have sent out new buds and blossoms, and Johanna had never before known it in such intensity. Indeed, she had only one wish, that her happiness might not be marred.

Before Johanna had risen from her bed of sickness, Wenzel received a letter. Curiously he broke the seal; as he read it through, he frowned. Once he read it, then he tore it in pieces and threw them into the stove.

Johanna waited a few minutes to see if he would tell her of its contents—he remained silent.

"From whom is the letter, Karl?" she asked at length.

Wenzel replied reluctantly:

"From Doctor Brand."

"Are the contents unpleasant?" asked Johanna.

"No. Brand urges me to come to a meeting this evening, as my presence is absolutely necessary.

Surely to-day and on the following evenings important questions are to be treated of, and he knows he cannot very well spare my support," he continued, "for the workingmen listen to me in preference to him, as I am one of their class."

"Go to the meeting, if you wish to," said Johanna. "I already feel stronger and will be able to do without you to-night."

"I will remain with you," replied Wenzel. "You could ask no sacrifice of me that would be too great; I have promised to nurse you, and I will keep my word."

Tenderly Johanna gazed at him. She extended her hand and drew him upon the bed.

"Karl, do not be carried away by Brand's ideas," she implored. "What you are striving for, you will not attain, or only for a short time."

"We will attain it," interrupted Wenzel. "Let only the majority of the workingmen be won over to our cause, then we will have the power!"

"If you form an alliance, will not your opponents do the same?" asked Johanna.

"They may do so; we will overcome all opposition."

"And if you are overcome? Have you never thought that you would be punished the most severly because you belong to the leaders?"

"Who can punish me?" cried Wenzel. "Are we not permitted to better our condition? Is there a law that forbids that?"

"You are sacrificing yourself for others," replied

Johanna, "and if you ever should need their help, they would desert you."

The following day Wenzel again went to the meeting and a few days thereafter Brand called for him in person. Johanna was in the adjoining room with her child, as she was not very well. Therefore Wenzel refused the doctor's invitation.

"Do you wish to break your promise and leave us altogether?"

"No, that is certainly not my intention."

"Then you are acting absurdly and against your own interest, for the confidence which you formerly inspired is beginning to waver."

"I will go with you!" cried Wenzel. "No one shall say I am lacking in interest."

He went to Johanna and told her that he was obliged to attend that meeting.

"I will return as soon as possible," he added. "I would not leave you to-day on any account were it not imperative that I should go."

He extended his hand to his wife.

Johanna made no reply. She had overheard the doctor's words and was firmly convinced that her husband allowed himself to be led altogether by him, for he understood how to work upon Wenzel's sense of honor and upon his vanity.

The latter repaired with Brand to the house in which the meeting was to take place. It was held in a small room in a cafe which the proprietor readily placed at their disposal, for he did a thriving business, as during the debates many glasses of beer were consumed.

Wenzel and Brand heard talking and confusion before they entered the hall. As they entered they were greeted with cheers.

"Are you still sorry that you came?" whispered Brand to him.

"No!" cried Wenzel, whose cheeks glowed with delight. "From now on I shall again come regularly."

There were twenty present; they were seated at a long table. To his astonishment Wenzel saw Hassel seated at the lower end; he could scarcely believe that he saw aright.

"How does Hassel happen to be here?" he asked Brand, drawing him aside.

"He is a new member whom we have gained. He is enthusiastic over our cause and speaks well. Do you know him?"

"Yes," replied Wenzel. "I hardly think that his interest can have anything in common with ours."

"Why not?" asked Brand.

At that moment Hassel approached Wenzel, apologized and asked him to let bygones be bygones.

Wenzel extended his hand to him in token of friendship.

The conference began and was rather stormy.

The beer had mounted to many brains and the most absurd views were put forth.

Even Brand perceived that the excitement was so great that it threatened to carry him with it. His strength was not sufficient to combat it.

"It is high time that you should come regularly," said he to Wenzel. "If we do not hold together

firmly, we shall lose our influence. We will be thrust aside and all our efforts will have been vain."

"I will come regularly," promised Wenzel.

His cheeks were flushed by excitement, his eyes sparkled, and at that moment he would have sacrificed everything to aid the cause.

It was far on in the night when he and Brand returned home.

Johanna seemed to be sleeping, and quietly he crept to bed.

Evening after evening he spent at the club; all his thoughts were fixed upon the new aim, and he scarcely noticed Johanna's pale cheeks and the silent sadness which lay upon her features.

Her entire world was the small home, her husband and child. To the latter she devoted all her care. Many tears did she shed in secret over her husband's neglect, until at length she could no longer restrain herself.

One evening when he returned from work and in a few moments prepared to set out again, she asked:

"Are you going to leave me again?"

"I must," replied Karl curtly.

"You must?" repeated Johanna vexed, at his reply. "Karl, I can not see why you must go; but this I know, that you are not doing the duty you owe your child and me. We are scarcely anything to you; and even when you are here your thoughts are far away."

Wenzel's brows contracted.

"I fail in my duty toward you?" he cried. "And I

am only impelled by the desire to improve your condition. You reproach me because I am anxious about you."

"Karl, I am satisfied with our lot," said Johanna calmly. "We have been so happy that I scarcely had a wish—why are we so no longer?"

"Because you will not understand me!" cried Wenzel. "I can and will not separate myself from my work which I began and have led towards completion! If you considered my honor you would not ask it."

Johanna's cheeks grew still paler; she fastened her large, dark eyes upon her husband who reproached her, who deserved it so little.

"If I consider your honor?" she repeated slowly, and a pained, bitter expression hovered about her lips. "Take back those words! You cannot be more concerned for your honor than I am, for the husband's honor is his wife's as well. It is not the first time that you have reproached me for not being able and not wishing to understand your aim. I grasped it, but I fear that you will gain very little honor by it."

Wenzel, sprang up indignantly.

"Be silent!" cried he violently. "I did not expect to hear such words from your lips!"

"Wherefore not? Have I not as your wife the first right to warn you?"

"I need no warning and don't want it!"

"If you had not wished to accord me that right you should not have chosen me for your wife!"

"Perhaps it would have been better had I not done so!" cried Wenzel without considering his words.

Scarcely had he uttered them than he regretted them; but he was too angry to confess it.

Johanna started; she strove for breath and composure. Was that her reward for her unspeakable and self-denying love? Was that the end of her happiness? Every nerve in her body quivered; all that she had borne in silence for weeks and months, found a forcible utterance; her powers of self-control at that moment could not be governed.

Trembling with agitation she advanced towards Wenzel. "You are not indissolubly bound to me!" cried she passionately. "The bond which binds us can be broken—you need to exercise no consideration, for I—I am satisfied!"

She hastened into her bedroom and closed the door behind her.

As if turned to stone, Wenzel stood there; he stared at the door which Johanna had locked; he passed his hand over his brow, as if he wished to dispel an unpleasant dream, then he seized his hat and rushed from the room and the house.

Johanna sank beside her child's bed and buried her face in the pillows. She heard Wenzel rush hastily down the stairs; she longed to rise and to call him to return, not to leave her thus, but her knees refused to do their duty.

She sobbed aloud.

She finally sought consolation, but could find none.

Wenzel turned through the streets without knowing whither he was going—it was, too, a matter of indifference to him.

There was on that evening a meeting at which he should have been present—he did not think of it. He had forgotten the words he had spoken to Johanna, —only her reply echoed in his ears.

He laughed bitterly. As he did so, a hand was laid upon his shoulder; almost terrified he turned,— Hassel stood behind him. No one else could have come more inopportunely.

"I heard you laugh,—you must be very merry," said Hassel.

"I am indeed," returned Wenzel, for the book-keeper must not divine what was taking place within him. "Why should I not be? I was just thinking that the man is a fool who puts all his faith on one thing! He is the most sensible who neither believes nor confides!"

"Have you been deceived?" asked Hassel.

"I? How could you ask such a question? No—no! It was only a thought which arose in me, and I believe it is true."

For a few moments they walked side by side in silence.

"Are you going to the meeting now?" asked Hassel.

"To the meeting?" repeated Wenzel, as if awaking from a dream. "Quite right, there is to be one this evening. Of course I am going; come, that we may not be late."

They reached the place of meeting.

In order to drown his sorrow and to regain his composure, Wenzel quickly drank several glasses of

beer. A number of workingmen were already assembled in the hall. He was in despair, for he could not forget Johanna's words.

The session began; Brand opened it and, on Wenzel's motion, was chosen chairman.

In a short time all was excitement. The question debated was to apply to Frobel for higher wages, and if he refused them to strike.

Speeches were made by Hassel and Wenzel; the latter exhorted the men to adhere to their cause and promised them support. His words were greeted with applause. Many applauded, none dared to oppose him.

When the stormy meeting closed, Brand and Wenzel returned home together. Brand's last words to him were:

"Now, go to rest."

Where should he find rest?

He dreaded the moment when he should again see his wife.

He paused, leaned against the balusters and pressed his hand upon his brow.

Footsteps on the stairs aroused him. A lady was ascending. Starting up, he was about to hurry on, when the lady stood still and raised her lantern.

"Ah, Herr Wenzel, do we meet once more?" cried the lady. "You seem to have quite forgotten me, or do you not wish to know me?"

The voice sounded familiar to Wenzel; he turned aside the glaring lantern and looked into Betty's laughing face. "Betty! How came you here?" he asked in surprise.

Many applauded him. None dared to oppose him.—Page 180.

"How came I here?" repeated the young girl. "I returned home late like you. I live here!"

They reached Betty's door.

"You live here?" asked Wenzel, as if he had not understood the words.

"Certainly. Did you not know that?"

"No. Since when have you lived here?"

"For months. And you really did not know it? Do you care so little about your fellow-lodgers?"

"I had no suspicion of it."

"Then you must see my rooms," continued Betty, and before Wenzel could excuse himself, she had opened the door, seized his hand and drew him into her room.

Comfortable warmth and the perfume of flowers welcomed Wenzel.

While Betty hastily lighted the gas, he glanced in surprise at the luxuriously furnished room. It was incomprehensible to him, how the girl could have obtained such fine apartments; he could scarcely understand how he had come there himself.

Betty noticed his surprise.

"Do you like it here?" she cried, laughing. "Well, come and sit down!"

"I have known for some time that we lived neighbors," she continued, chatting gayly; "I have seen you frequently, but in vain did I hope to meet you. I finally decided that you had quite forgotten me, or did not wish to meet me."

Wenzel was still perplexed; he seemed to be in a dream, and he was forced to gather all his strength together to assure himself that it was a reality.

"I have not forgotten you," he replied. "I did not even know that you lived here. Of late I have been at home very little."

"I know through my brother how enthusiastic you are in behalf of the workingmen," interrupted Betty. "You are indeed their leader and an excellent one too. Now, let us drink a glass of wine together!"

She rose to fetch the wine.

Wenzel seized her arm to detain her.

"You must not refuse me!" cried she. "It is a long time since we clinked glasses."

She placed the wine upon the table, poured it out and reseated herself beside Wenzel.

The glasses clinked.

Was it the girl's hilarity or the wine which incited Wenzel? His brow grew smoother. Why could he not be merry as he had once been?

He refilled the glasses himself and no longer thought of Johanna.

"Wenzel!" cried Betty, whose cheeks were flushed and whose eyes sparkled. "Do you know that my brother once cherished the wish that I should become your wife! Ha, ha! Do not turn aside! I liked you; but you see I am not vexed because my brother's wish was not fulfilled. You can nevertheless be my friend. I do not desire to win your love, but simply to occasionally spend a merry hour in your company. Will you come to me and be my friend?"

"Yes!" cried Wenzel, grasping the girl's hand. "I will be your friend." Then he related to her his efforts and told her how near they were to success,—

Then he related to her his efforts and told her how near they were to success—when suddenly the door of the room was burst hastily open.—Page 183.

when suddenly the door of the room was burst hastily open; Johanna entered the brightly-lighted room, but upon the threshold she paused. Upon the sofa she saw Wenzel seated beside Betty. Her lips moved; she waved her hand as if trying to grasp some invisible object—then with a faint cry she fell upon the floor.

Wenzel and Betty sprang up. Wenzel cast himself beside her, raised her head and anxiously called her name. Johanna did not hear him. Her face was pale; what grief was imprinted upon those rigid features! In terror he remarked it.

"She is dying! She is dead!" he exclaimed in despair.

Betty sought to comfort him; Johanna's condition appealed to her kindness of heart. She fetched water and bathed the swooning woman's brow and temples.

Finally Johanna opened her eyes and raised herself slowly. At first she did not seem to know where she was; when she saw Betty, she covered her face with both hands. Suddenly, however, she remembered what had happened.

She had been seated by her open window, looking out into the night, awaiting Wenzel's return. She regretted the words she had uttered; before the sun again rose she would ask his pardon; he must forgive her if she sued at his feet, if she told him how tenderly she loved him.

She waited a short time, her anguish was intense.

Scarcely knowing what she did, she put on a shawl and left the room.

She was about to mount to Brand's apartments, when she thought she heard Wenzel's voice in Betty's room. She listened; she must have been mistaken, for how could her husband be there? More plainly still she heard his voice; she could not mistake.

Forgetting everything,— she pushed open the door—and entered; at the thought of what had happened she shuddered.

Wenzel clasped her in his arms; she did not seem aware of it, she tried to rise, but sank back powerless.

"Compose yourself," implored Wenzel.

She did not hear him. She stared before her, her hands, which she had clasped convulsively, trembled. Finally she summoned all her strength and rose. She tottered toward the door.

Wenzel supported her,—she seemed scarcely to notice it, but was not strong enough to refuse his aid.

With difficulty she reached her apartments; she hastened to her child's bedside and there she gave way. Her sorrow found vent in tears; with her face buried in her hands, she sobbed convulsively.

In vain Wenzel sought to comfort her. He vowed that he loved her as tenderly as ever, he told her how he had chanced to be in Betty's room;—she did not seem to hear him.

Her tears finally ceased flowing! Her hands fell from her face; with difficulty she rose. Her eyes were cold and calm, her features rigid.

"I pray you, leave me in peace," said she. "The words I uttered this evening, I regretted; I wanted to ask your pardon, to tell you that I—that I spoke

in excitement, that my heart did not feel them—now—now it is not necessary—you have verified them!"

Notwithstanding her faltering voice, her words sounded firm and decisive. She dragged herself to her bed, and without undressing herself, cast herself upon it.

Wenzel once more approached her and asked her forgiveness—she could not reply.

He returned to the other room and closed the door behind him.

For a long time he paced the room, struggling with himself and his feelings. Finally, fatigued, he cast himself upon the sofa and sleep had pity upon him.

XVI.

Early the next morning Hassel repaired to the manufacturer, Heerbach, who owned a factory similar to Frobel's, but not quite so large.

As soon as Heerbach saw the bookkeeper he led him into his room and carefully closed the door.

Hassel informed him of the petition to be presented to Frobel and of the workingmen's intention to strike should their request for higher wages be refused.

"Herr Heerbach," said he, "in case the men quit work at Frobel's, you have promised me three hundred marks; that will take place to-day—so I have a right to that sum."

"I will give it to you," interrupted the manufacturer impatiently.

"Now, pray, listen to my proposition! Will you give me double the sum if everything happens as I say it will; if the workingmen's petition be refused, and if they are finally compelled to go to work again on the old terms. If that does not come about, I will forfeit those three hundred marks."

The manufacturer glanced searchingly at him; he seemed to be considering.

"Very well, I agree to it!" he then replied. "I rely

upon you to preserve the strictest silence," he added, for he did not trust Hassel.

The bookkeeper smiled.

"My own interest requires that," said he. "I would not dare to appear at the club were the men to find out about our understanding. I hope that satisfies you."

"Yes," replied Heerbach.

Hassel left him. He was contented with his bargain. Of one thing the shrewd merchant had not thought. Even when he had paid the six hundred marks, he would not be absolved. He would have to pay him to maintain silence, and Hassel regarded Heerbach as the source from which to obtain funds if he were embarrassed later on.

When on that morning Johanna entered the room in which her husband still lay upon the sofa and slept, she was strikingly pale. She had through the night thought over what had happened. She wanted to believe Wenzel's assurance that he was not guilty, then again she doubted him. Her faith in him was shaken.

Wenzel awoke as she entered, started up and advanced to Johanna with extended hand.

"Do you still think me guilty?" he asked.

Johanna's eyes for a second met his, before she replied.

"If I were convinced of your guilt, I should not be here!" she said gravely. "But one thing I can not conceal from you: I do not understand you any more, and only time can restore my confidence in you."

"Johanna, I was provoked at your words, and intoxicated, when I unexpectedly met Betty upon the stairs. I did not know she lived in the house; she drew me into her room to show it to me; I do not even know why I followed her; she was so gay that I forgot for a short time what had tormented me the whole evening."

"And you forgot me too!" interpolated Johanna.

Wenzel did not acknowledge that, although he could not deny it.

"Cease, cease, Karl," interrupted Johanna. "Yesterday was a hard and fatal day in our lives; each of us has something with which to reproach ourselves, but we can atone for it. Let us think of that! What we have lost, we must gain once more, or our happiness will be gone forever, and our lives will be sad."

Wenzel assured her that he would do all in his power. He wanted to add more, but his head was heavy and dull, and not without anxiety did he think of the task he had undertaken and which he had that morning to fulfill. He had not the courage to tell Johanna of it, for he knew that she would be anxious.

Brand had promised to call for him; he sought to anticipate Johanna with a shake of the hand.

Upon the stairs he met the little student.

"Ah, coming already!" cried he. "You have probably rested as little as I did. If I could only go with you to Frobel to see his surprise! He will not like it. But do not allow yourself to be intimidated.

Remember that you are speaking in the name of the workingmen, that you do not stand before Frobel as his inferior, but as a free man. Upon the next hour much will depend!"

They had reached the factory. A number of men there awaited Wenzel's arrival; upon the faces of all was expectant excitement.

"I will wait here until you have been to Frobel's," said Brand. "Let me know his answer at once. Pull yourself together; and above all be brave!"

Wenzel entered the factory. As he did so, many of the men gathered around him; he was their leader and spokesman.

"Is Herr Frobel in the factory?" he asked.

"He is in his room," was the reply.

"Now go to your work," continued Wenzel. "He must have noticed that you are not working, but are standing together and talking."

Accompanied by four of the men; he repaired to Frobel's room. The manufacturer sat at his desk and turned aside when they entered. He tried to appear composed, but his eyes sparkled and the corners of his mouth twitched.

Wenzel was himself too agitated to perceive it.

"What do you want?" asked Frobel curtly, for he was accustomed to speak in that tone to the men.

Wenzel told him their errand.

Frobel trembled with excitement, yet he controlled his feelings.

"Who determined on this?" he asked.

"Your workmen."

"All?"

"Yes, without one exception."

Frobel drew a deep breath slowly.

"You say you will give me twenty-four hours for consideration?" asked he.

"Yes," replied Wenzel.

"Ha, ha! You are very kind not to force me to reply at once!" cried Frobel, with a bitter laugh. His composure was disappearing more and more. "I will give it to you at once; listen, and bear my answer to those who sent you to me: I refuse to accede to their demands and will not raise their wages one penny! That is my reply!"

The blood left Wenzel's cheeks, for such a decisive and abrupt manner he had not expected.

"You have twenty-four hours for consideration," he repeated.

"I need no time," Frobel interrupted violently. "I am no boy who does not know what to do, and I shall not retract the answer I have given you. I do not prevent you from stopping work; you have your free will, although you say you are slaves. Tell this to your law-givers. Now leave the room, for you have nothing to do here!"

When Wenzel reported their employer's sharp reply to the men, they were angry. A few uttered threats; most of them seemed undecided what to do.

Then Frobel entered the work-room.

"Those who do not want to work for the wages they have been receiving, can leave the factory immediately," said he in a loud, firm voice. "Whoso-

ever has wages coming to him can get them from my cashier!"

A loud murmur of discontent arose.

"Silence!" exclaimed Frobel, stepping boldly into their midst. "You say, you will no longer be slaves; now I will not be yours. I am master here and will remain master. This is my house, and I will make use of my rights towards everyone who dares to oppose me here. You wish to cease work—you shall have your wish!"

"We have the right to require higher wages!" cried one workman.

"Certainly!" replied Frobel. "I do not dispute the right; but so much the less will I allow my right to be disputed. I force no one to work for me!"

"You can not get on without workmen!" said one.

"That is my business and I allow no one to interfere in it!" retorted Frobel. "If I were to close my factory forever to-day none of you could hinder me, and I would ten times rather do so than suffer myself to be dictated to. You wish to cease work; then go, you have nothing to do here!"

He returned to his room.

Threats followed him. The anger was augmented by disappointment. Wenzel had difficulty in preventing some act of violence.

In front of the factory they were joined by Brand, who bade them be courageous and egged them on to struggle for their rights. Hassel joined them as well at the nearest café, where the boldest hopes and the most improbable plans were formed.

It was long past noon when Wenzel finally tore himself away and returned home. His mood was not joyful but depressed.

Johanna had awaited him for dinner; she did not ask him why he came so late, but the excitement visible in his eyes, attracted her attention.

He told her what had happened.

Johanna turned pale.

"You need not fear," said Wenzel. "You shall not suffer. Frobel will soon yield, then our position will be a still better one."

Johanna was not comforted by that assurance; what she had secretly feared had come to pass. She did not think of reproaching her husband; what would it have availed?

She only replied: "Karl, you must know best if you have done right."

On the evening of the same day another meeting was held, on which further steps were decided upon, and the division of the money for their support was divided. The sum in hand was only sufficient for a few days, and nothing could be expected from other societies; but it was resolved to wait resolutely and not to flinch.

A committee was appointed to work in the interest of the cause. Wenzel was at its head, together with eight other men, among them Brand and Hassel.

Days followed on which Wenzel was not at home except to sleep. The funds had been exhausted and want came only too soon.

The needy turned to the committee, before all to

Wenzel who was their leader; they required help of him.

"Help us, for you promised us help!" cried several.

Wenzel did not reply. It grieved him that he could not help them, that the promises he had made had proven vain. Very much depressed he went home; there at least he heard no reproaches. Johanna greeted him as usual. Gently she asked him for money that she might buy bread and milk for her child!

"Money!" he replied, and laughed bitterly.

There where he had hoped to find rest, the same request was made; even to his door want had come. He had no more money—his savings were gone. He could not confess that to Johanna, but a feeling of despair possessed him.

"You shall have money," cried he, turning to leave the room.

"Karl, where are you going?" asked Johanna, detaining him, for his agitation had not escaped her.

He could not tell her the truth.

"I loaned a friend money," replied he. "I will go to him, because I know I can have it back any time."

He left the room.

Johanna noticed that half-pensively he felt for his watch, as if to convince himself that he still had it—a dread suspicion arose in her. Had it come to this: that he must sell his watch?

Anxiously she awaited his return.

He came back shortly and gave her a few dollars.

"There!" said he. "You will not need more than this just now."

Involuntarily Johanna's eyes sought his watch; she did not see it. The blood flowed from her heart and for a moment she strove for composure.

"Karl—Karl—you have sold your watch!" cried she then.

Wenzel turned and walked to the window. It would have been a great relief if he could have confided all that oppressed him to his wife. Once he would have done so, and she had then taken an interest in his every joy and care. The time was over. Was it his or her fault that the confidence was lacking? He could not reproach Johanna.

"Yes, I sold it because I did not find the friend at home and did not wish to leave you without money," the replied. "I can get it any day, and moreover, I do not now need a watch," he added with a bitter smile.

Johanna was silent. With difficulty she repressed the tears which entered her eyes.

Again several days passed, and the workingmen's position became still harder.

In order to hide the true state of affairs, Wenzel had already sold various objects which had formerly been given to him; but he could not succeed in deceiving his wife; she had anticipated that it would come to that, although she did not think he could be so obstinate against better conviction.

Gladly she practiced every economy. What mattered it that she only ate a piece of bread many a day? It hurt her that Wenzel grew more reserved daily. Again she sat alone in the little room; the

child lay beside her in its bed and slept, when she heard steps upon the stairs and loud voices. She listened. They were the voices of women, and that comforted her, for she knew very few women and expected no visitors. Therefore she remained quietly seated.

Without rapping, the door was hastily opened and several poorly-dressed women, carrying two children on their arms, hurried into the room. The coarse, excited features of those who entered terrified Johanna; she rose and advanced toward them.

"Where is your husband, where is Wenzel?" cried one of the women, still a young person, who had a child on one arm, pressing forward. Her voice was rough; her reddened face betrayed that she was under the influence of liquor; in her large, protruding eyes was an impudent look.

"He is not at home," replied Johanna.

"Of course," continued the woman in a loud, mocking voice. "He is probably sitting with the others in a tavern; he will spend his last penny with them and thinks nothing of his wife and child! He is the leader and has led all astray."

The blood left Johanna's cheeks.

"What do you want with my husband?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"What do we want?" repeated the woman, with mocking laughter, as she drew nearer Johanna. "Bread, bread and money! He influenced our husbands to quit work, by turning their heads and promising them higher wages. Ha, ha! He led them on.

Now he is carousing with them. They do not care if their wives starve. My husband always comes home drunk, and if I ask for money or bread, he strikes me. He talks nonsense about his word of honor which he has pledged—bah! If he were honorable, he would not let his wife and child starve! But he is mistaken in me if he thinks that I will bear this longer in patience. My child cries and wants bread, and I can give it none because I have none. Your husband has misled ours, we now demand bread of him; he must give us bread!"

"Our husbands are the same,—he has misled them all, we demand bread of him!" cried the others in confusion.

Johanna's face grew more and more rigid. Was there not, alas, too much truth in the woman's words? Had he not ignored her warning, and was she any better off than those women? Did she not suffer too?

She summoned all her strength to her aid.

"I will tell my husband when he comes home," she replied calmly. "He will help you if it lies in his power."

"Ha, ha! If it lies in his power!" repeated the woman scornfully. "He has no other power than that of leading our husbands astray. He will help us? With what? Surely, you are comfortable enough here! See"—she turned to her companions, "see how nicely he is fixed who has misled our men! Want has not entered here! Ha, ha! She will tell her husband that he may laugh at us! She hopes to

rid herself of us with those words! But before I will starve with my child, I would rather go to prison! Give us bread—bread!"

Johanna trembled; had she had money or bread, she would gladly have given it up; did not hunger stare at her from the eyes and sunken cheeks of the child which the woman carried upon her arm? She could not tell them that she herself had already wanted bread.

"My husband will help you," she assured them once more.

"When? When?" exclaimed the half-intoxicated woman. "Perhaps when we are starved! I want bread *now!* Will you wait?" she asked, turning to the others. "Will you be put off by a promise? Can you satisfy your children with that? No, no!" cried the woman, pressing nearer Johanna.

"I have already lost two children, and my third, my last will be carried to the cemetery if I do not care for it better!" cried a pale, emaciated person, holding a sickly child above the heads of the others. "The doctor has prescribed meat and strong soups for her and I can not even give her a piece of bread! Cry, cry, that all may hear that you are starving!" she said to the child. "Cry for bread, bread! You have had nothing to eat to-day!"

The child, a girl of about three years of age, began to whimper.

"Do you hear that?" continued the woman violently, advancing toward Johanna. "You do not seem to have ever heard such tones! The child is crying because she is starving; give us bread, bread!"

Fearfully Johanna stepped to her babe's cradle in order to protect it.

"I have no bread," said Johanna, almost in a whisper.

"Ha, ha! Do you hear?" cried the virago, irritating her companions still more. "She says she has no bread! Do you see poverty here? Give us money then!"

"I have none!" said Johanna in terror.

"She lies! She has no pity upon us and wants to send us away! She is no better than her husband! But I will not be put off; does she need this fine cover on her table?"

"No, no," cried the rest.

"Then I will take it!" cried the woman with the child, as she tore the cover from the table.

"That is right," cried the others, laughing.

They approached and took what they could find.

Johanna stood there motionlessly. She had not the strength to put forth her arm to hinder them.

Like Furies the excited women surrounded her.

"How comfortably her child sleeps!" cried their leader, extending her hand towards the tiny bed.

In affright the young mother cast herself before her.

"Spare my child!" she besought, clasping her hands.

"Ha, ha! Do you think our children are not cold?" cried the woman, pushing Johanna aside. "Shall we starve and freeze both?"

In a semi-swoon Johanna sank beside her child's bed and spread both arms over it to protect it. She

scarcely heeded that the shawl which she wore over her shoulders was torn off, that the women took with them what they pleased. It all seemed to her like a horrible dream. She heard mocking laughter, and curses hurled at both her and her husband, but the voices seemed to come from a distance.

At last all was quiet—the angry women had left the room.

For some time she kneeled there half-unconscious, then her child's cries awoke her. She started up and fell back, as she cast a glance into the half-empty room.

She took up the baby and carried it to her bed, upon which she fell unconscious. She remained there until Wenzel returned home.

In amazement he looked around the room.

"What has happened?" he exclaimed.

Johanna rose slowly and told him what had taken place.

His eyes gleamed passionately, angrily.

"They shall answer for that!" cried he. "What impertinence! Is it not enough that I have to combat the unreasonableness and rudeness of the men, their wives fall upon and despoil you! Do you know them?"

"No, I have never seen them," replied Johanna.

"Because everything does not go as they wish, the men blame me," continued Wenzel in excitement. "Is it in my power to bend Frobel's will? Can I force him to yield? As long as they hoped to win they supported me; now that they have to wait, they

lose courage! But they shall wait; I will compel them to keep their word!"

"Will you gain anything by it?" asked Johanna.

Wenzel was silent.

"Karl, it is not yet too late to turn back," continued Johanna. "Go to Frobel, he will give you work under the old conditions."

"No—no!" interrupted Wenzel, violently. "That would be the last step I would take, for by it I would derogate from my honor and render myself a laughing-stock! Do not speak of it, I will not hear of it—not even from you! The angry vixens have frightened you; the law shall prosecute them!"

"No, Karl!" besought Johanna. "I do not judge them so severely. What shall they do if hunger gnaws at their vitals and their husbands do not help them? Can you punish a mother who is desperate because her child is starving? Blame the man who has brought her to it."

Wenzel turned away. Those words applied to him as well and he could make no reply.

At the same time Hassel entered the house in order to visit his sister, whom he had not seen for several days. His eyes beamed, for a hope which he had given up forever, had been reawakened. Gerhard had written him and besought him to induce his sister to follow him to the town in which he lived.

That message he was about to deliver and he did not doubt that Betty too would be pleased, for Gerhard's letter was prompted by genuine affection.

He reached his sister's door and found it locked.

Impatiently he knocked and rang. No one opened. All was still within.

He sought the landlord in order to obtain news of her.

"She has gone away," replied the man in answer to his question.

"Gone away?" repeated Hassel in surprise. "When?"

"Yesterday morning."

"Where to?"

"That I do not know," was the reply. "The young lady gave me the key of her room that I might take care of it until her return."

"When will she return?"

"I do not know, but I do not think it will be very soon, because she took a great deal of luggage with her and sent her maid home."

Hassel's astonishment increased.

"It is incomprehensible to me," he cried. "Did she go alone?"

"Yes."

Involuntarily Hassel thought of Gerhard. Had he written to Betty and asked her to come to him? Then he thought, what reason would Betty have had to go away without his knowledge?

"Did you say you had the key to the room," he asked, again turning to the landlord.

"I did."

"Pray then open it for me! My sister did not tell me of her intended journey—perhaps she has left a note for me."

The landlord complied with his request.

When Hassel entered his sister's room, he paused in astonishment. Disorder prevailed. The drawers of the commode and secretary were open and empty; besides the half-withered flowers upon the table he did not see one object which belonged to Betty. It was impossible that she could have taken all that only for a journey; the state of the room proved to him that she had gone never to return.

He entered the bed-chamber—the same disorder there; he looked through the papers upon the floor, in the hope of finding a letter which would explain all—but in vain.

The landlord was not less surprised.

Hassel sought to conceal his true feelings from the man and said to him:

"She will probably send me some word to-day and I will let you know at once," said he. "Lock the rooms carefully and let no one in! At any rate you will lose nothing, for the rent is paid in advance."

Hassel left the house and slowly walked along the street. The whole affair was as yet a mystery to him.

He met Wenzel—perhaps he could give him some explanation. He approached and questioned him, but he knew less than the landlord.

He proceeded on his way. To whom should he turn for information? He recalled the fact that Betty loved the baron; but Gersdorffen had never expressed any affection for her. Still he concluded to seek him out.

Gersdorffen's apartments too he found closed, and the landlord told him he had gone away.

"When?" asked Hassel.

"Yesterday morning."

Angrily the bookkeeper stamped his foot; it was evident that the baron and Betty had deceived him.

"Do you know where he has gone?"

"No."

"Nor to which station he drove."

"Nor to that either."

"Did he say when he would return?"

"No, he only said that he would probably be away some time."

"Ha, ha! Until he has grown tired of the girl!" cried Hassel with a bitter laugh. "Then he will probably leave her and pay no more attention to her! So be it; why has she so foolishly thwarted my plans?"

He repaired to a café in a mood in which he was vexed with the entire world.

XV.

On the following morning a meeting of the workingmen took place; it was not very fully attended, but it was stormy nevertheless.

At Hassel's instigation the desperate men resolved to brave all and to repair to the factory in a body to prevent the return of those of their party who had seceded, and who had gone home to their noon-day meal.

"Wenzel shall lead us!" cried the men, dragging him with them.

At the gate they posted themselves.

The hour for work to recommence chimed; several men came down the street.

"There come the deserters!" cried some. "Stop them—do not let them pass."

"No one has the right to detain us!" replied the men. "We have no bread to eat, therefore we must work."

"Wenzel, refuse to let them enter! You, as our leader, have the right to do so," cried a voice.

In excitement Wenzel advanced.

"Back! "cried he aloud. "You broke your word pledged to us."

"First of all let those fulfill their word who promised us higher wages," replied one of the men.

"You shall have higher wages, but you must wait," continued Wenzel. "You are traitors to our cause and you alone will bear the guilt if it fails!"

A few seemed to hesitate.

"Come," cried an old man to them, as he approached the gate. "I do not care to be made a fool of the second time."

"Back!" cried Wenzel, barring the way.

"No one can command me!" replied the old man.

"I can!" continued Wenzel, trying to push him forcibly back.

The old man's comrade hastened to his aid, but Wenzel thrust them both aside.

A wild tumult was about to arise when the gate was opened from within and several officers appeared.

Frobel had sent for them, and they had reached the court by another door.

They saw Wenzel push the workmen forcibly from the gate, and they seized him in order to arrest him. The blood left his cheeks.

"I will not allow you to arrest me!" cried he, freeing himself from the policeman's detaining hand.

Again they seized him.

"Will you desert me now?" called he to his companions.

The majority of them drew back in terror; only the little scholar and three workmen tried to help him—they too were arrested. Hassel had disappeared at the first and from the windows of a neighboring restaurant had watched for the result of the undertaking to which he had urged the men.

With a suppressed murmur the men saw their comrades and their leader led away; then they dispersed in order not to meet with a similar fate.

With evident sorrow Wenzel walked away. He was thinking of his unfortunate wife who was left alone without the means wherewith to support herself.

Brand walked beside him and sought to inspire him with courage.

"Do not fear," said he. "We will be examined and then released, for they will be afraid that the workmen will free us by force. What can they do to us? Nothing!"

Wenzel did not reply; he was depressed and without the least ray of hope.

They were led before the chief of the police and examined, then they were put in cells.

When Wenzel reached the narrow cell and the door was locked behind him, he sank upon the wooden stool and buried his face in both hands. He was thinking of Johanna. What would she do without him? Why had he not listened to her warnings? She was now sitting alone in her tiny room, awaiting his return; no one would tell her of what had happened.

In agitation he sprang up and with all his strength knocked at the door, so that it resounded in the long corridor out of which the cells opened.

The guard came to his door and bade him cease knocking.

"Send to my wife and tell her that I am here!" cried Wenzel.

"I will not allow you to arrest me!" cried he, freeing himself from the policeman's detaining hand.—Page 207.

"What do I care for your wife?" replied the guard impatiently. "If you do not keep still, I will inform the inspector and you will be punished!"

Wenzel sank upon the stool again.

Johanna sat at home and awaited her husband. Dinner-time passed and he did not come. It was not the first time she had awaited him in vain; she therefore sought to be patient, although oppressed by an indescribable unrest.

Night came and hour after hour dragged slowly by. Had Wenzel forgotten her altogether? More than once she rose, opened the window and looked out on the dark court listening for his footsteps.

The lights in the neighboring houses were extinguished, one after another; the people were going to rest, only she was awake. She sat there pensively until the clock chimed the midnight hour. Almost terrified she sprang up, hastened again to the window and listened a long time in vain. Then she seated herself by her child's bed-side. She sat there motionlessly, living over her entire life.

At length, weary and exhausted, her eyes finally closed and sleep overcame her.

When her child's cries awoke her it was broad daylight, and in terror she started up. Her first glance sought Wenzel. She did not see him. Had he perhaps gone away again? She could not believe so, for she slept lightly and would have heard him return home. He had not come; something must have happened to him. Hastily she nursed her child, then wrapped it up warmly and with it left the room.

Perhaps Wenzel had come home very late and had gone to Brand's room in order not to disturb her.

With feverish haste she ascended the stairs.

On reaching Brand's room she found the door locked. She knocked, but all was still within.

Slowly she again descended the stairs. As she crossed the court she heard the landlord talking to another man by an open window.

"It is as I say," said he, not perceiving her. "The uneasy heads will now be quiet for a while. Frobel, with whom I am acquainted, told me yesterday at the inn that part of the men returned to him, the rest sought to prevent their entrance into the factory. Wenzel was foremost, he was their leader. Frobel sent hastily for the police and they arrested the disturbers of the peace. Wenzel and Brand indeed tried to resist the police, but the result was bad for them!"

Johanna stood there as if turned to stone. Her lips were half parted as if about to call for help; she was unable to utter a sound.

"Unfortunately Wenzel and Brand live in my house," continued the man. "But I can not keep such people beneath my roof any longer; they will surely be imprisoned several months. I wish they would keep them years, for such people can not be punished severely enough; they have lost their love of work, they want to earn big wages and do nothing!"

Not a word escaped Johanna; she reached out her hand towards the wall in order to steady herself, then with a loud cry she fainted.

When she recovered consciousness, she lay in her bedroom upon her bed; compasssionate hands had brought her thither. Two women who lived in the same house, but whose names she scarcely knew, were with her.

Slowly she rose. What had occurred seemed to her like a horrible dream and with difficulty could she realize it.

"Is it true that my husband has been arrested?" she asked the women, who replied in the affirmative.

Johanna buried her face in both hands; her sorrow was too great to find relief in tears.

"He is the most to blame, for he incited the others," said one of the women, as if those words would comfort the wretched wife. "If it had continued, all the men would have lost their liking for work; but now we hope it will be better, for the guilty will be kept in jail a while, and that is right. When the men do not work, we women suffer the most."

Johanna's hands fell from her face.

"Thank you for your kindness; but now please leave me to myself," said she, although she felt so weak that she could scarcely raise her hand.

"You are still too weak," expostulated the woman. "Do not take your husband's fate too much to heart, for he deserves it, and men are not worth anything! If my husband did not have to work, I should really not mind his being imprisoned a few months. He would then certainly find out that he has it much better at home and would break himself of the habit of going to the tavern every evening. Before we

were married he was too kind for anything, and now he grudges me every penny; therefore, I say, men are of no account and if they were not a necessary evil, it would be better there were none."

"Pray, leave me!" repeated Johanna. "I feel stronger."

She summoned all her strength and sat up. It was impossible for her to listen longer to such words, for she would have suffered anything rather than that a word of complaint against her husband to others should have passed her lips.

When the women were gone, she sank beside her child and sobbed passionately.

A few hours later, her child upon her arm she, proceeded to the jail within which Wenzel was imprisoned. Rudely the porter asked her what she wanted.

She told him she wished to see her husband.

"You can't!" was the short reply.

"My husband has not been sentenced; he was only arrested yesterday," besought Johanna.

"So much the less reason why you should not see him,—I can let no one in."

Johanna asked to whom she should apply for permission to visit her husband.

"I do not know!" rudely cried the man, shutting the door.

Hesitatingly the unhappy woman paused—she knew of none to whom to turn for advice. How infinitely she loved Wenzel she now discovered as she stood before the gray, gloomy building, behind whose

walls he sat a prisoner. She could not restrain her tears.

She retraced her steps.

On her way she met several officers; she did not notice them. One of them stepped toward her—it was Lieutenant Rudolph von Brankow. She had not seen him for a long time.

"Johanna—is it possible—you—you?" cried he.

The unhappy girl tried to evade him; he laid his hand upon her arm.

"Johanna, is this your child?" he asked. "How do you live? Where? I have not seen you for such an age and yet I have thought of you so often! I have yearned for you, for I could not forget your lovely eyes!"

Johanna trembled; then she collected herself and looked up. Firmly, calmly and gravely she glanced at him. Upon her pallid face was graven such intense sorrow, her glance was so severe, that Brankow voluntarily took his hand from her arm. Half unconsciously he was awed by the majesty of womanly dignity.

"You have been weeping," said he in confusion, "are you unhappy?"

Johanna turned her head away and walked on in silence. Brankow dared not follow her. When he was no longer near her, she hastened away like a fugitive in order to reach the safe shelter of her small apartments.

XVIII.

The following morning nearly all the men resumed work in Frobel's factory, for their leader was in jail, and Hassel had not put in an appearance.

When the latter learned of the result of the strike, he repaired at once, Heerbach to receive his reward. When it was paid him, Heerbach informed him that he need expect nothing further.

"You seem to place little value upon my silence," said Hassel with a smile.

"I do value it, but not so much that I would pay you more."

"You will change your mind," said Hassel with a mocking smile.

With these words he left the manufacturer's room

He was about to enter a public-house, when he met a police commissioner with whom he was acquainted, who detained him.

"I should like to speak with you only a few moments," said the officer.

"I am at your service as long as you wish," replied Hassel, pleasantly.

"Where is your sister?" asked the man.

With apparent surprise Hassel looked at his interrogator; he seemed to wish to divine why he asked that question.

"I do not know," he then replied.

"You will not take it amiss if I do not trust your assurance," continued the commissioner. "I know that your sister was dependent upon your will, consequently she will not have left town without your knowledge."

"If she has nevertheless done so?" interrupted Hassel. "She has gone away unknown to me and I know not whither."

"Do you know where Baron von Gersdorffen is?"

"No?"

"You were with him a great deal?"

"I was; yet I do not know where he is at present."

"But you know that he is no longer in town."

"Yes."

"How do you know it?"

"Because I went to his rooms and heard from his landlord that he had gone away."

"He left the city when your sister did—do you not know that?"

"No; but I suspected or rather feared it."

"Why did you fear it?" asked the commissioner.

Hassel hesitated to reply.

"Because I do not favor an intimacy between him and my sister," said he at length.

"Why not? You can be frank with me, for I think I know the baron as well as you, perhaps better—at least as far as his past is concerned."

Hassel shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"Now allow me to ask a question: why are you inquiring for my sister?"

The commissioner hesitated before he replied:

"I will tell you. A short time since a young man appeared in Frankfurt accompanied by a lady. Both seemed very aristocratic; they succeeded in calling to their house young men from the best families and then they played cards for high stakes. Suspicions well-founded pointed to the fact that he was dishonest and that the lady he represented to be his wife, was aiding him; but before the police reached him, he left. The personal descriptions of the gentleman and lady accord exactly with those of the baron and your sister."

Hassel's face had turned still paler; he tried to overcome the uneasiness which possessed him.

"It was not my sister for she does not cheat at cards," cried he. "She has never done anything wrong, you have therefore no right to cast such suspicions upon her!"

The commissioner maintained his composure.

"The police have that right," he replied. "If my suspicion is correct, I hope it will soon be proven."

He left the bookkeeper, who repaired to his public-house.

Without delay he hastened to the nearest station and commissioned a policeman in civil dress to watch Hassel closely and to inform him at once if the latter mailed a letter; for he hoped to gain thereby a clew to the whereabouts of Hassel's sister and the baron.

* * * * * *

Johanna had had a bitter experience. She was ill and felt so miserable that she could scarcely stand,

and yet she had to do so for her child's sake. She had no one to whom she could turn and of the women who lived in the same house she could ask no favor, for they would have overwhelmed her with reproaches about her husband.

She thought of Ina; she knew her faithful friendship, she had her pen already in her hand to summon her with a few words, when her hand sank to her side. Could she send for her friend to come to her in her misery?

She had a strong character, but her courage began to fail her. Then her thoughts turned to Wenzel. Was he not in a worse position than she was? He sat in his cell alone and forsaken. She would go herself to the judge and tell him that he had been led astray and had in reality only striven for the good of the workingman.

What pleasure lay in the thought that Wenzel would owe his freedom to her! Would not that bind him still more firmly to her?

Finally, after several days, she felt strong enough to venture upon the difficult task. With her child upon her arm she repaired to the court.

In the building she at length discovered which judge was to conduct the case. She asked the apparitor to announce her; instead, he conducted her into an ante-room, where she seated herself and awaited her turn.

For some time she waited patiently; the apparitor seemed to be unaware of her existence. When she approached him, he said: "Ah, I had entirely for-

gotten you. It is too late to-day, the judge is about to go home."

"If I could only see him for a few moments," implored Johanna.

"It can not be," replied the man. "Come again to-morrow morning and I will bear you in mind. There is, moreover, no hurry, for if you wish to intercede for your husband there will be time enough in eight days, he will not be tried so quickly. But it will be of no avail!"

Tears entered Johanna's eyes. The man did not know what an effort it had cost her to come. Would she be able to return the following morning?

At that moment the judge left the court-room. He was an elderly man, with gray hair and a bent form. On seeing Johanna's pale face and the tears in her eyes, he paused.

"What does the lady want?" he asked the servant.

"She desires to speak with you; I have already told her to come back to-morrow," replied the apparitor.

Once more the judge glanced at the young woman's pale, sorrowful face.

"Come," said he then, re-entering the room.

Johanna followed him with throbbing heart; the man's face inspired her with confidence, for it spoke of gentleness and kindliness.

"Take a seat," said he, observing Johanna's condition, "and then tell me what you want."

Johanna told him her name and said that she had come to intercede for her husband.

"I know he has done wrong," she added, "but he meant to do right. He was led astray by others and used as a tool. Up to that time we lived peacefully—it was his greatest happiness to be at home evenings and that happiness he sacrificed."

"I believe you," replied the official calmly and not without sympathy, "but I cannot help you, for I do not pronounce sentence upon him."

"He will not bear it if he is sentenced!" she exclaimed, with difficulty restraining her tears.

"He will bear it," assured the justice consolingly. "I am even convinced that the punishment will have a beneficial effect upon his life, for it will give him time to think over how absurdly he has acted. It will bring him back to reason."

"If I could only see my husband for a few minutes!" implored Johanna.

The justice seemed undecided. Full of tender compassion. his eyes rested upon the woman's pale but lovely face.

"I could grant your request," said he then, "but I think I am doing you and your husband a service by refusing to do so. You will gain nothing by it, you will only be mutually agitated and heighten your grief; believe me, it is better not to see him."

Johanna stood silently by, staring before her.

"You must be in need, for your husband has earned nothing for weeks," continued the justice. "Tell me frankly. I will help you as much as I can."

"Thank you—I need nothing," replied Johanna with difficulty.

She could not confess that she was in need of assistance.

"Well, then try to yield to the inevitable. It will not be long before your husband will be with you, and he will, I trust, be permanently cured."

Johanna took her leave and returned home slowly. She sought to find consolation in the justice's words, although they brought her little. This conviction was firm within her: to wait and bear the bitterest need, rather than heap disgrace upon Wenzel's name.

XVII.

Gerhard Frobel liked it very well in M. Betty, however, he could not forget, because he thought she really loved him, and because he deceived himself with regard to his own feelings. He still hoped to win her back.

Hassel had written him that his sister had gone away; but he did not doubt that she would gladly accede to Gerhard's wish, for he knew her heart, and was sure that she would be faithful to an attachment once formed.

A great change had taken place in him; he worked all day in the factory, and began to take pleasure in work.

As his father heard through Berger of the change in his son, he supplied him liberally with money, and Gerhard needed scarcely to deny himself a pleasure.

Only one passion mastered him: gaming. Many an evening he spent at the gaming table with acquaintances, and Fortune was more favorable to him than formerly. He was convinced that those who had once called themselves his friends had cheated him. Therefore had they flattered and clung to him so closely.

Among the friends he had made in M. was a young Herr von Harbusch, who had sold his estate and had moved to town in order to enjoy its pleasures.

He met him one evening when he left the warehouse and was about to search for friends in order to spend a merry evening with them.

"I am glad I met you," cried he. "How shall we spend the evening? I do not care for the theater, for I was there yesterday. You are better acquainted here,—where can we meet pleasant company?"

"I cannot go with you to-day, for I am already bound by a promise," replied young Herr von Harbusch. "Last night I made the acquaintance of one Herr von Crotten and his charming young wife. We played cards, and Herr von Crotten, a very affable man, seemed to be especially favored by fortune; he won a great deal. In order to give us satisfaction, he invited a few of my friends and me to a small supper at his hotel this evening. Of course we shall play again."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Gerhard involuntarily, for it looked as if he would have to spend the evening alone. Moreover, he envied his friend the game he had in prospect.

"Come with me," said Herr von Harbusch.

"How could I do so? I do not know the gentleman," said Gerhard.

"That makes no difference," continued Harbusch. "Herr von Crotten is very genial. This noon I met him; he reminded me not to come too late this evening and added if I had a friend who liked to play, I should bring him with me."

"Is that so?" asked Gerhard.

"Upon my word of honor! Could I otherwise ask you to come?"

"I am not dressed for a party," said Gerhard.

"Ha, ha! Look at me!" cried von Harbusch. "I have on my everyday clothes. Herr von Crotten emphatically asked us not to put on fine clothes, for he said, a frock coat and white vest always mar the gaiety. His wife, too, joined him in his request. Frobel, that pretty, animated; little woman will please you! Lieutenant Schulze was in love with her after seeing her the first time. She is rather coquettish, and it suits her unusually well. She can laugh so merrily too! If you are not afraid of losing your heart, come with me! That you will be hospitably welcomed, I do not doubt."

Gerhard still hesitated.

"They play high, and I am not prepared for that to-day," said he.

"Nonsense! "cried von Harbusch, laying his hand upon his arm. "I have prepared myself for every emergency, and it therefore goes without saying that my money is at your service. Moreover, I intend to win back what I lost last night."

He drew Gerhard away with him.

They reached the house in which Herr von Crotten lived; the windows were brightly lighted.

"The man seems to have plenty of money, for this is the finest and dearest hotel in M.," said von Harbusch.

"Will he remain here some time?" asked Gerhard.

"Alas, no. He said yesterday that he and his wife would soon have to return to his estates, for he had undertaken to build quite extensively and therefore could not be absent long."

"Ah, Herr Fröbel!" cried he in an uncertain voice, "I have already the pleasure of knowing you! Pray, may I speak with you a few minutes?"—Page 226.

They entered the hall.

A waiter announced von Harbusch. He soon returned, and ushered the two friends into an ante-room. In the adjoining room they could hear merry and laughing voices.

The waiter opened the door—von Harbusch entered followed by Gerhard.

The brightly-lighted room dazzled Gerhard. He saw only a slender man and a finely dressed lady advance.

Suddenly he paused; his eyes were fixed upon the latter's face.

Von Harbusch did not notice it; he did not even see the fear which was written upon the faces of Herr von Crotten and his wife—he introduced his friend.

Still Gerhard stood there motionless; he had recognized the gentleman and lady—they were Baron von Gersdorffen and Betty.

The baron was the first to regain his self-possession; for him everything was at stake.

"Ah, Herr Frobel," cried he in an uncertain voice. "I have the pleasure of already knowing you! Pray, may I speak with you a few minutes?"

He pointed to the door of the next room and seemed to expect that Gerhard would follow him thither, but the young man was unable to collect himself so rapidly.

"No—no," cried he, rushing from the room.

Herr von Harbusch followed him, to obtain an explanation of his strange behavior.

A momentary, painful silence reigned in the room, for what had happened had been witnessed by all. Betty hastened into the adjoining room and locked the door behind her.

The baron breathed irregularly; he saw that all eyes were upon him, and it was difficult to find a means of extricating himself from his painful position.

"Gentlemen," said he to those present, with an embarrassed smile. "You have witnessed this peculiar scene and have a right to ask an explanation of me. I would have been very glad had it been spared me, for I do not know in what relations you stand towards Herr Frobel,—I must, however, make it. I have already met Herr Frobel; he seemed to fancy my wife and showed his liking in a way which insulted me. Nothing remained for me to do than to demand satisfaction of him; and I am convinced that any one in my position would have done so. Honor is the most sacred thing to a man! Herr Frobel refused me that satisfaction. I do not accuse him of cowardice, but look upon his youth as an excuse. You can now understand my surprise and my embarrassment when I saw him enter suddenly, while I had no idea that he was in M. I can only explain his appearance in this way, that Herr von Harbusch, to whom I said today that I should be pleased if he would bring one or more of his friends with him to supper, did not tell him my name, or that he did not understand him. In order to avoid all upleasantness I asked Herr Frobel to go with me into the next room; there I should have begged him to excuse himself; I wished to

spare you this disagreeable scene; the gentleman does not seem to have understood me. I am sorry for my poor wife who, by this unexpected meeting will be deeply pained, but I hope that you will forget what has taken place, for it would grieve me were our evening upon which I have counted so much, to be spoiled. Now excuse me a few moments. I must go to my wife; perhaps I can succeed in quieting her."

He entered the adjoining room.

None of those present doubted the truth of his words, for he had uttered them in a composed, simple manner.

When the baron joined Betty, he found her standing at the door, pale and agitated. Anxiously she gazed at him; he did not heed her glance.

"Did you hear what I told the gentlemen?" asked he curtly.

"Yes," replied Betty, who had listened at the door.

"Very well, then I need not repeat it to you. The devil sent that stupid fellow here to-night!"

"What shall you do?" asked Betty anxiously.

"The only thing that remains to be done! I shall try to make them forget the unpleasant interruption; we will therefore have supper served at once, the wine must do its part."

"I am now unable to come," said Betty. "I can not regain my composure so quickly."

"I will excuse you," continued the baron. "As soon as we begin to play you will, however, appear. It would be well if in the meantime you would use the time to pack our effects."

"Would it not be better to go away at once?" asked Betty.

"No, I can not send the men home; they might possibly meet Frobel this evening and learn all."

"And if he were to return?"

"That I fear the least. You do not seem to have noticed that he lost his head completely, as soon as he saw you. The fool still loves you and can not bear to see you in my company."

"He might apply to the police!"

"Nonsense! Why should he? He does not know what took place in Frankfurt! I beg of you not to borrow trouble. I shall try to keep the gentlemen here to-night as late as possible, that we may gain time, and you know we must take advantage of this evening, for many weeks may pass before such a favorable opportunity will present itself."

New fears arose in Betty's mind; she dreaded betrayal by Gerhard, and thought the policemen would enter any moment to arrest the baron and her.

Impatiently and angrily Gersdorffen stamped his foot.

"You shall do as I tell you," cried he. "If you do not, I will leave you, and you can remain here alone; you will then see how far your shrewdness will help you! You should know me well enough to know that on what I have resolved, I do, and that I never allow myself to be influenced!"

Without awaiting Betty's reply, he left her; he knew that she would act in accordance with his wishes.

"My wife regrets that she can not be present at supper," said he to his guests on his return. "But she has promised to join us later. Now, come, sirs; that interruption must not mar our gaiety!"

With a smile he opened the door of the adjoining room in which the table was spread.

The wine speedily did its work, and when the meal was over, the host and his guests took their seats at the card table. Betty then joined them. She looked pale and ill.

The game seemed to have no interest for her, she turned her entire attention to the glasses, which she filled and refilled.

The baron on that evening was especially favored by fortune. That it was owing to his extraordinary dexterity in shuffling the cards, no one suspected.

Several of the men who had lost heavily did not seem inclined to play any longer. But he persuaded them to continue until their money was exhausted, telling them that the situation was extremely embarrassing to him, for he could not understand his good-fortune.

"I scarcely shall dare to invite you a third time to play," said he, "still I should like you to have your revenge to-morrow!"

They promised to return the following night, for none of them suspected the baron of dishonest practices.

Gersdorffen knew Gerhard too well to be mistaken in him. The unexpected meeting with Betty, whom he loved, had given him a severe shock. As to her

relations with the baron there could be no doubt, and he had fancied she loved him.

Like a madman he rushed from the hotel. Herr von Harbusch followed him, in order to obtain an explanation. Upon the street he caught up with him.

"Frobel, I do not understand you!" said he. "You know Herr von Crotten and his wife! What has happened between you that you rush thus from the house?"

Gerhard scarcely heard the words; he still did not know if he was dreaming.

"I pray you, leave me!" cried he.

"You owe me an explanation, for I introduced you at Herr von Crotten's," continued Harbusch.

"You shall have it!" cried Gerhard with agitation. "I will give you the explanation you desire—but not now—not to-day—it is impossible Were you never in your life shamefully deceived? Have your wishes, your hopes ever been shattered at a blow?"

"I do not understand you," said von Harbusch.

"To-morrow I will tell you all, then you will understand me. To-day I can not, for I must learn to understand it myself," cried Gerhard, rushing past von Harbusch so quickly that the latter could not follow him.

The next morning he did not go to the warehouse, because he intended to seek an explanation from Betty. With a throbbing heart he repaired to the hotel in which she lived with Gersdorffen. He asked the waiter for Herr von Crotten.

"He left early this morning," replied the man.

"Where did he go? And —and—his wife?" asked Gerhard.

"Of course she went with him," said the waiter with a smile. "He told me," he added, "if anyone inquired for him, to say he had been called by a dispatch to his estate and had therefore to leave at once. Where his estate is, I do not know."

Gerhard left without replying. He took with him the conviction that Betty was unworthy his love.

At the Bergers, preparations were being made for the reception of visitors. Thekla Bremer, who was related to Berger's wife, had long since promised to come to M. with Ina, and was about to fulfill her promise.

The old lady, who still hated the men, arrived finally in M. Gerhard was confined to his room by indisposition and days passed without his meeting the two ladies who were under the same roof with him.

"Well, are you not anxious to meet our guests?" asked Berger who had come to inquire about his health.

"I am not curious," returned Gerhard with a smile. "I shall become acquainted with both ladies soon enough."

"Will you dine with us to-day?" asked Berger.

Gerhard replied in the affirmative. Calmly he awaited the dinner-hour, for Berger had not succeeded in arousing his curiosity. After the deceit practiced upon him by Betty, he had determined to give no one his heart again.

With composure he bowed to Ina as she was introduced to him. He saw that Berger's eyes were fastened searchingly upon him, and he tried to conceal his surprise at Ina's beauty.

He was silent, for in Ina's vicinity he felt an embarrassment hitherto unknown to him. Involuntarily he compared her with Betty. She seemed to him like a child, so frank and confiding was she.

Then he turned to Ina's aunt. With difficulty could Gerhard suppress a smile at the man-hater's peculiarities.

After dinner, when Berger left for his warehouse, he gladly accepted Frau Berger's invitation to entertain the ladies.

The afternoon drew him nearer Ina. And she was truly delighted to find someone to whom she could speak of her home.

In the evening Thekla glanced severely at Ina, for she did not approve of her intimacy with Gerhard; but Ina was unaware of her aunt's sentiments, for she was innocent; she treated Gerhard as she would have any other man, for, so far, he had not impressed her in the least.

With Gerhard, it was different; he spent the next and the next evenings at home, and when Berger asked how it came about that he was suddenly so domesticated, he blushed slightly and replied that he was not entirely well yet.

A few days later, as her aunt and Frau Berger were both indisposed, Ina took a walk alone. In order to escape recognition, she wore a veil.

It was the first time she had gone out alone in M.

She at length saw Gerhard approaching her. He was alone. He did not perceive her until quite near her. Her heart pulsated more rapidly. Should she pass him in silence? She was still in doubt as to what to do, when Gerhard raised his head and saw her.

"I did not expect to meet you here" cried he, joyfully.

"It was too close indoors—I longed to be outside," replied Ina, as if excusing herself.

"I believe you," said Gerhard, "I think it must be dreadful to be always in your aunt's company."

Ina smiled.

"And yet she is so kind, notwithstanding her failings," said she. "Her heart is tender, but she has had many experiences which have embittered her."

"It is impossible for me to imagine that that old lady has a heart," cried Gerhard, laughing.

"Do you wish to force me to continue my walk alone?" interrupted Ina.

"No, no, Ina," continued Gerhard, with animation. "I am indeed pleased that I have you alone. In Berger's rooms I feel that your aunt's eyes are upon me, and they deprive me of the courage to tell you of what, since the day upon which I first met you, has filled my heart."

"I pray you, cease," cried the maiden, almost imploringly.

"Will you rob me of the opportunity of expressing myself frankly?" continued Gerhard. "Ina, can you

reproach me for the fact that since that day my thoughts have been yours? I may be unworthy of you; but no human power, not even yours, can prevent my heart beating for you!"

Ina was unable to reply; but she walked faster, as if to escape him.

"I pray you, listen to me," said Gerhard, keeping close to her side. "From the candid way in which I shall lay bare to you my entire life, you can see that it is impossible for me to deceive you."

Ina still remained silent.

He then told her of his extravagances and follies, and asked her to help him lead a better future.

"Ina, at least, do not deprive me of hope," he added, seizing her hand. "You can take back your word any day if you see that I am unworthy of your love. Or do you not believe in the ennobling power of love? Are you so indifferent to me, that you feel no compassion for me?"

"No—no!" stammered Ina—she scarcely knew what she said. Gerhard's confession had surprised her, she felt that her heart was Gerhard's, but she could not believe it!

Ina trembled, yet she did not withdraw her hand.

"Will you give me this hand?" cried Gerhard, clasping it still tighter. "You can make one being happy for life,—do not say no!"

"You have it!" replied Ina softly.

"Mine, mine!" rejoiced Gerhard. He pressed it to his lips and would have clasped her to his breast, had he not seen people in the distance.

Ina urged him to return home. Arm-in-arm they returned to the town.

When they reached Berger's house and Gerhard drew her to him and pressed the first kiss upon her lips, she freed herself and hastened to her room.

Thekla saw her enter with heightened color and beating breast; she seemed to be startled, and yet her eyes beamed with happiness. The old lady asked sharply:

"What has happened?"

At first Ina hesitated. Then, approaching her aunt, she took her right hand in both of hers and cried: "Aunt, I am engaged!"

Coldly she withdrew her hand.

"Engaged?" she repeated.

"Yes, aunt!" cried the happy girl.

"To whom?" she asked.

"To Gerhard."

The old lady started up; she looked at Ina as if she had seen a ghost.

"To whom?" she asked once more, for she must have misunderstood her niece's words, it was not possible.

"To Gerhard," again said Ina.

"To him, to that horrible person!" cried Thekla. "But I will not have it, never! To that person whom I hate, whom I can scarcely bear to see, to that person who has addressed no pleasant word to me—I will not have it!"

"Aunt, he is good and he loves me dearly," implored Ina. "He said his happiness would be destroyed if

I did not become his. Could I make him unhappy?"

"Yes, he deserves nothing better!" cried the old lady, beside herself with excitement. "So this is the fruit of my admonitions! I have so often told you men are worthless; you have not listened to me. Ah, such ingratitude is without a parallel! But you shall not marry the fellow! I will not have it!"

"Aunt, I love him and no one can prevent my marrying him," cried Ina.

"Ah, you dare to defy me?" cried she, and her voice trembled.

"Yes! I will not allow my life's happiness to be destroyed by any one, least of all by one blinded by absurd prejudices!"

"Then I am quit of you!" cried Thekla. "I will have nothing to do with you, and you will not inherit a mark of that which I have intended for you."

"I have counted on nothing," replied Ina.

The old lady for a moment did not answer, then she continued:

"One thing more I must tell you: if you do not retract your promise you gave that fellow, I shall go away to-day, nor will I take you with me, for my house from this time forth is closed against you—you can see where you will obtain support."

Tears rose to Ina's eyes. She could not give up Gerhard. She sought to change her aunt's decision, but in vain.

When Ina found that her prayers proved of no avail, she hastened to Berger's room and tearfully

informed him of her aunt's determination and of the cause of the same.

Berger shook his head.

"I do not believe that she will go as far as that," said he.

"She will; she dislikes Gerhard, so she opposes me."

"I will speak with her myself," said Berger. "Remain here, while I go to her; I will soon bring her to reason."

After a short time Berger returned; his face was red, his brows were contracted.

Anxiously Ina glanced at him.

"Your aunt is absurd," said he at length. "All reasoning has proved fruitless against her stubbornness. She insists upon leaving to-day. So, my patience exhausted, I told her that I could and would not hold her."

"She is going away and will not take me with her!" cried Ina tearfully.

"Calm yourself," said Berger, taking the girl's hand. "I will keep you here as I would my daughter, and if you do not like it, Gerhard's father will receive you, for he can wish for no greater happiness for his son than you will give him."

Thekla Bremer left in a few hours, without bidding Ina farewell.

The latter was soon consoled by Gerhard who kissed away her tears.

When late at night Ina sought her room, she wrote a long letter to Johanna and told her friend of her

happiness. A few days thereafter, the letter was returned to her, with word to this effect: that her friend was not in her former home.

Ina had no suspicion of Johanna's distress, and comforted herself with the thought that in a short while she would see her in person, for Gerhard's father was coming to take her home with him.

XX.

Johanna's life grew sadder and drearier. The day on which sentence was to be pronounced upon Wenzel and Brand arrived; Johanna knew of it, but she was unable to be present.

The court-room was filled with workmen; with moody composure Wenzel had confessed all, scarcely daring to raise his eyes. Brand was not depressed, but spoke eloquently, though his words availed him naught; he and Wenzel were sentenced to two months, imprisonment.

When she heard the result of the trial, no word of complaint passed Johanna's lips, for she had not counted upon Wenzel's release.

In order to fill her cup of sorrow to overflowing, the landlord had turned her out of her rooms because she could not pay the rent, and had kept most of her furniture.

In a narrow, out-of-the-way street on the fourth floor Johanna had found a small room; thither she repaired with her child and the few things still remaining to her. She had very little that she could sell, and the bitterest need knocked at her door, for she could not sew much, as the care of her sickly child took most of her time.

Had she not had the child, she would not have

borne the misery. For its sake, she must bear up, for what would become of the poor little being were it to be left without her care?

Pale and wretched, she sat one morning in the narrow, miserable room. The child had been wakeful all night; it was now asleep; she had seated herself at the window and taken up her sewing, for she had to work in order to live.

As she sat there, she recalled her past life. Sadly she looked towards the future. Should she ask charity of others and become a beggar? At that thought she started, "Never—never! Rather would I seek death!" she was about to cry, when her gaze fell upon her sleeping child. For its sake she must live.

The child's fretfulness during the night was the commencement of an illness the gravity of which she did not suspect. From the mother's anxiety and sorrow the little one had imbibed the germs of disease.

Johanna was unwearying in her care for the child; she seemed to think of nothing else. That day and the following night passed and she did not suspect her child's illness; only when on the second day its face changed strikingly, did she recognize the danger. Despair possessed her. She could not leave the babe to summon a doctor and had no one to send.

Finally she succeeded in inducing a woman who lived in the same house to fetch a doctor. It was not an easy matter in the large city, for poverty-stricken abodes physicians do not enter very readily.

Towards evening he came. He stepped to the tiny bed and looked at the child; he laid his hand upon

As she sat there, she lived over her past life. Sadly she looked towards the future.—Page 241.

its brow and felt the feeble pulse. Slowly, as if pained, he shrugged his shoulders.

With watchful, fearful eyes Johanna glanced at him; convulsively she grasped his arm.

"Doctor, is there any danger?" she cried.

The doctor looked at the pale, pretty face of the young woman. It seemed to embarrass him to have to tell her the truth.

"Be calm, compose yourself!" said he.

"Is danger imminent?" asked Johanna. "Tell me the truth."

The doctor hesitated. Of what avail was it to hesitate. Would not the truth in a few hours shock the unhappy woman more severely? Dared he leave her unprepared?

"Compose yourself!" he implored, seizing Johanna's hand. "We must submit to the inevitable—my help is too late!"

With a piercing shriek Johanna swooned.

The doctor raised her and laid her upon her bed; he called the woman who had summoned him and then left the room.

When Johanna recovered consciousness, she was inspired with anxiety; she rushed to her child's bedside in order to clasp it in both arms. She dismissed the woman, for she longed to be alone. Never had she longed so yearningly for Wenzel as now, when despair threatened to overwhelm her. Only he could have known what she suffered, for only his heart had part in the child.

Johanna sat motionlessly beside the bed of her

child, who scarcely showed a sign of life; her eyes were fixed upon the tiny face, which grew paler and paler.

The lamp burned lower and lower, but Johanna did not notice it. Her head sank upon her breast; finally her eyes closed; sleep had overcome her.

When she awoke, she started up, for the morning sun shone brightly into the small room; she looked at her child. It lay there so quietly; was it still asleep? Softly she laid her hand upon its brow; in terror she started, for its brow was cold.

She shuddered; it was cold in the room. Half-asleep, not realizing that her little one was already dead, she rushed to the stove to light a fire. The child must have warmth.

When the fire was kindled, when she had put coal on it, she hastened back to the bed. Gently she took the child's small hand, it was cold too; she felt its heart—it was still. With a shriek she raised the tiny being, pressed her lips upon mouth and cheeks, pressed it to her bosom in order to warm it, for she could not reconcile herself to the thought that it was dead.

All her caresses did not call back the life which had flown. Then she held up her darling, looked at it and cried: "Almighty God! Dead! Dead!"

She stood there several seconds trembling; then she laid the remains upon the bed. Suddenly a mysterious calm crept over her; not a tear entered her eyes. The excess of her grief froze her; no words, no lamentations could have expressed it. The entire outer world seemed dead to her.

For some time she sat there; her head finally grew dizzy, she tried to rise, but fell back upon the chair. Once more she gathered together all her strength; she noticed that the room was filled with suffocating coal-gas. She felt impelled to hasten to the window in order to open it and to obtain air; she had reached the window and was stretching out her hand, when she let it fall, for one thought occurred to her.

What bound her to life? Could she not let the coal gas complete the work which it had begun? Would not all her pains be stilled at once? Her anguish disappeared; a passionate longing for rest and eternal sleep possessed her. Then she thought no more except of Wenzel, but without sorrow; when he returned from prison, both she and the child would be dead—he would be unhampered—it would perhaps be best for him.

With difficulty she dragged herself to the stove, put a few fresh coals on the fire and closed the damper.

Slowly she returned to bed, half-unconscious; she sank beside her child's body which she encircled with her arms.

Thus—thus she would die and find peace.

XXI.

Gerhard accompanied Ina to his parents' home, in order to introduce her. They received their prospective daughter with open arms.

On the following day, Ina, escorted by Gerhard, set out in search of her friend, and they repaired to the home in which she had formerly lived, in order to obtain information with regard to her.

The landlord, of whom they inquired, told them of the fate which had befallen Johanna's husband.

"Where is she?" asked Ina, with difficulty articulating the words.

"I do not know nor do I care," replied the man. "She could not pay the rent, so I simply turned her out. I retained a portion of her goods, in order to have security."

"Oh, God!" cried Ina, pressing her hands to her eyes, for a miserable picture rose before them. Her friend put out of her home, alone with her child, without any aid. Ina drew Gerhard away, for she could not listen to the heartless man's words.

Frobel could not tell Ina where his former overseer's wife lived. At length, through one of his men, he found out where the unhappy woman had found shelter.

"Remain here, I will go to her," said he to Ina,

for the man had told him of Johanna's distress. and he wished to hide it from his son's betrothed.

"I must go to her myself," replied Ina.

"You will no doubt find your friend very much changed," continued Frobel; "she is in needy circumstances. Let me go to her first."

"If she is in distress, I should surely go to her," replied Ina. "I shall have no peace until I have seen her. She once comforted me and stood by me, and now that I may possibly help her, shall I hesitate?"

"Then I will go with you," said Frobel.

When they reached the house and were about to ascend the narrow, dark staircase, Ina paused.

"She lives in such a wretched place!" cried she, with difficulty restraining her tears.

Slowly they mounted the stairs; of a woman, whom they met, Frobel asked if Johanna lived there.

"She lives here, but you must go up two more flights," said she. "She must be at home, for I have not seen her this morning."

"How is she?" asked Ina, impatient to learn more about her friend.

The woman looked keenly at Ina and hesitated several seconds before she replied.

"Badly off," said she at length. "Her husband can not work, so she is in want. Moreover, her child died last night."

When Ina heard those words she hastened on, anxious to comfort her friend.

Frobel could scarcely follow her.

Arrived at Johanna's door, Ina sought to open the same; she knocked, but received no reply.

Once more Ina knocked —in vain; Frobel tried to open the door, but it resisted his efforts.

"Something is wrong here; the door must be opened!" cried Ina anxiously.

Unsuccessfully Frobel tried to soothe her.

"I would not be surprised," said the woman who in her curiosity had joined them. "Last night in her distress she was all unstrung, and she can not stand very much, for she looks ill."

Ina could not reply; she was forced to lean against the wall in order to stand upright.

Frobel tried once more to open the door; he bore his weight upon it, and the frail lock gave way.

Dense smoke was all that could be seen.

"Almighty God!" cried Ina, trying to enter the room.

Frobel held her back.

"Let me go in first!" cried he, and hastening to the window he opened, it in order to obtain air, for the coal gas was suffocating.

Ina had, however, followed him. She saw her friend and her child lying upon the bed, she rushed to them, called Johanna's name, and with the cry: "Heavenly Father! She is dead—dead!"—she cast herself upon her.

"I thought so!" said the woman, who had entered too.

As if turned to stone Frobel stood there; but he soon controlled himself, approached the unconscious woman and took her hand,—it was still warm.

"She may yet be saved, there is still life in her body," cried he. "Fetch a doctor at once," he said to the woman. "But quickly, quickly; I will pay you well for every moment!"

That promise did not fail to have its effect; the woman hurried away.

Frobel raised Johanna and bore her to the open window; he placed her in a chair.

Ina turned to lift the child, but recoiled when she found that the tiny form was already rigid.

She then approached Johanna, fell upon her knees before her, seized the unconscious woman's hands and pressed them to her lips. Sobbing, she called her name; no answer followed; she gave no sign of life.

The doctor came. He examined the woman and did not give up the hope of saving her. Then he turned to the child.

"It has been dead some time; that life ebbed away twelve hours ago," said he.

"She could and would not outlive the loss of her child," cried Ina, who did not leave her friend's side.

At length Johanna showed signs of returning consciousness; her pulse was again noticeable, but it was very feeble. She was carried back to bed, in order that she might breathe more freely.

"Let her have good care and nursing," said Frobel to the doctor. "Spare no expense; I will pay it."

The doctor assured him that he would see to matters.

"I hope to save her," said he. "How long she will

suffer from the results of the blood-poisoning, I can not tell."

"Obtain a nurse, who will stay until she is well again," added Frobel.

"I shall remain here—I will nurse her!" cried Ina.

"No!" said Frobel. "Your frail body would not bear the strain. You can visit her daily; her care must be entrusted to a practical hand."

As the doctor hastened away to obtain a nurse, Frobel had the child's body removed from the room and attended to the matter of its burial.

Then he returned home with Ina.

Johanna convalesced very slowly.

Ina could not visit her friend for several days. When she did so and entered the sick-room, she found Johanna sitting up in bed. She extended her arms, to Ina, who rushed to her, embraced her and sobbing, buried her face upon her breast.

In Johanna's eyes, too, the tears gathered and slowly trickled down her cheeks. Caressingly, soothingly she slowly passed her hand over Ina's hair.

"I am glad that you came," said she, gently raising her friend. "Sit down here on my bed. I have so much upon my heart that I can tell to you alone, for I know you will understand me. Ina, you have saved my life, and I thank you for doing so. When I resolved to die, I scarcely knew what I was doing; despair had possessed me, and I felt that I could live no longer. My child was dead and I was alone—entirely alone and deserted. I tremble even now as I look back upon those dark, terrible hours. One

thought torments me constantly. In a few days, Wenzel will be released; he must not know that I attempted to take my life,—it would destroy the pleasure of meeting again."

"Johanna, he has no right to reproach you, for—is it your fault that this happened?" cried Ina. "Is it your fault that your happiness has been destroyed? Did he not do it himself?"

"He was carried away by an idea, he was misled! And the man he injured has been so kind to me; he does not bear me any malice. Will you thank him for me?"

"I know he did it gladly," assured Ina, "and I am convinced that for your sake he will pardon Wenzel."

After that Ina visited her friend daily.

Frobel was still vexed with Wenzel and was loathe to grant Ina's request, and yet he secretly paid the Wenzels' overdue rent and had the furniture retained sent to Johanna's apartments, without mentioning his share in it.

The day on which Wenzel was to be liberated drew near. With impatience and at the same time with dread Johanna anticipated it. She hoped that with Wenzel's return a new life might begin for her. But she dreaded breaking to her husband the death of their babe, and Ina promised that one of Frobel's workmen should tell him of it before he left the prison.—

After his release, as he was stepping out of the door, he was joined by the messenger sent by Frobel.

The man seized his arm and detained him.

"Stay, for I bring you a message from your wife," said he.

"From my wife?" cried Wenzel quickly. "How is she?"

"She has been ill, very ill," was the man's reply. "Nor has she yet fully recovered and she requires the most careful nursing. She has seen trying times. There are cares and sorrow which even the strongest disposition can not shake off!"

Wenzel involuntarily passed his hand over his brow. She had been ill, she had seen trying times—was not he to blame? Was there not a reproach in the man's words?

The joy which had filled his breast vanished.

"How is my child?" he asked at length.

The man hesitated; it was difficult for him to tell the truth and yet he dared not hide it.

"It is—dead," was the answer.

"Dead! Dead!" repeated Wenzel. Dead perhaps for want of proper care! Ah, and that too!"

He pressed his hands to his eyes. Then only did he thoroughly comprehend how much Johanna had suffered; for he knew how tenderly she loved the child.

"I have told you that you might have time to compose yourself," continued the man. "I know how such news grieves and it was better for you to learn it through me than for your wife to be obliged to tell you."

"Yes, it is better so," he replied, scarcely knowing what he said. "It is better so, for my first question would have been for the child. Have you anything more to tell me?"

"No. Come, I will take you to your wife."

"No, no, leave me! I can find the way alone," said Wenzel, anxious to be alone, that he might strive for composure.

"You do not know where she lives," said the man.

"I do not know?" repeated Wenzel in surprise. "Has she left the rooms in which I lived?"

The man nodded his head in the affirmative.

"Why?" asked Wenzel. "She liked those rooms, we were so happy in them."

Again the man hesitated; still he would have to learn it, and it would be better he should tell him than Johanna.

"Necessity compelled her," replied he. "She was unable to pay the rent; so she was put out of the house,—landlords seldom have hearts. Had I known in time how matters were with her, I would have helped her as much as possible; but she has borne it all alone."

Wenzel did not speak; he could not. Silently, bowed down, staring fixedly before him, for he feared to meet an old acquaintance, he followed the workman.

So that was the first greeting of his freedom, and all he had brought about himself.

When they reached the house in which Johanna lived, the man paused.

"She lives here—on the fourth floor!" said he.

Wenzel scarcely seemed to hear the words; nothing could detain him longer. He rushed up the stairs, he burst open the door; a frail form tottered towards him—it was Johanna.

Hastening to her, he flung himself before her, clasped her knees, buried his face in her dress and cried, amid his sobs: "Forgive me, Johanna, forgive me!"

With tears in her eyes, the young wife stooped and raised him. She had forgotten his faults; she was happy to be able to cast herself upon his breast.

It was a touching yet tender meeting. Between them lay a tiny grave and many tears.

"Johanna!" cried Wenzel. "I am cured; from now on my life shall belong only to you!"

"Hold fast to your resolution and happiness will return to us," replied the sorely tried woman, falling upon his breast.

XXII.

A difficult task lay before Wenzel the next morning: he went to Frobel to thank him for what he had done for his wife.

In answer to Wenzel's plea that he had meant to do right,—but that he had been misled, he replied:

"I believe you. If I did not, I should not lose one word on you. You had an excellent position; it will not be easy to find such an one again. What shall you do now?"

"I shall seek work and begin from the beginning."

Frobel did not reply; his eyes rested upon the man's bent form.

"Will you have the courage to carry that out?" he asked. "Will not discontent again possess you when you think of your former position?"

"No, I will bear it—I owe it to my wife," said Wenzel in a low voice.

"Yes, you have a great deal to atone for to her," continued Frobel. "You must build up from the foundation her happiness, which you destroyed. If your striving is honest and earnest, I will stand by you—but only as long as I see that you are faithful to your word."

"I will remain so," assured Wenzel.

"I believe you. What can I do for you?"

"Take me back as a workman!" cried Wenzel.

"Your former position is filled; I can not put the man out who has it, for I have no cause to be dissatisfied with him."

"I will be satisfied with the position of a common workman."

"Very well," said Frobel, extending to him his hand. "Now return to your wife and remain with her to-day, for she has been alone long enough!"

Wenzel withdrew.

Frobel told Ina what he had done on his return home.

Ina felt that her friend's position would be humiliating, but Frobel thought it was the best means of strengthening his character.

At Frobel's wish, Ina remained in his house. Gerhard returned to M., but only for a short time, as he desired to enter his father's business, which pleased the latter very much. He had really become another man and himself could not understand how he could have found pleasure in his early life.

On his way home, a few days later, tired from a business journey, he entered an inn to obtain refreshment. Scarcely had he seated himself, when Hassel entered the room. The latter looked very shabby; his coat was threadbare, his cheeks more sunken than usual.

Involuntarily Gerhard turned away his face; but the bookkeeper had not lost his impertinence.

Apparently delighted, he advanced and seated himself at the same table.

"I did not expect to find you here," said he. "I thought you were still in M."

"I returned a few days ago," replied Gerhard, rather coldly.

"I have been told that you are engaged; I wish you joy," continued Hassel. "I wanted to write to you to M. to congratulate you, but I have been unfortunate; I have been ill, I still feel weak and can barely earn enough to live upon. The happy days we once spent together, have long since passed; I never meet our old friends."

"Where is the baron?" asked Gerhard.

The bookkeeper's brows contracted. "The rascal deserted my sister in the most shameful manner!" cried he with agitation. "He left her in L. entirely without means, without enough even to pay her hotel-bill, so that she had to sell her effects in order to pay it and obtain money with which to return. She is now living here, and is badly off, for I can do nothing for her. What her future will be I do not know, but I fear it will be sad. I have thought of leaving town with her."

"Give her this," said Gerhard, handing the bookkeeper his purse.

"Thank you," replied Hassel, whose face changed as he became aware of the weight of the purse. "Betty would be delighted if you would call upon her. Only yesterday did she tell me how much she longed to see you."

"No!" replied Gerhard decisively. "I shall never see her again. What once attracted me to her is past; I would not visit her, were I not engaged."

Hassel dared not urge Gerhard and the latter soon withdrew.

Several months sped by. In Frobel's house happiness reigned and the day of the young couple's marriage was rapidly approaching.

Wenzel was still employed as an ordinary workman, and he remained true to his promise and worked diligently.

Johanna was well again and her cheeks were as rosy as ever.

Ina had repeatedly besought Frobel to give Wenzel a better position, but each time he replied with a laugh: "Not yet, child. His probation is not ended. He must learn that happiness is not so easily won. Moreover, he seems perfectly satisfied with his lot."

Frobel went away for eight days; the result of his trip seemed to have been successful, for he was very merry.

On the morning after his return he sent for Wenzel; with composure the latter entered.

"Wenzel, I am satisfied with your zeal and your diligence. I hoped to be able to give you back your former position, but I can not send away the man who has it without cause. But I promised you more and I must keep my word. I am going to open a branch at L. At first I thought I should entrust the management of it to my son, but he wishes to remain here. As it requires at its head a reliable man, and as you have again won my confidence, I shall give the position to you."

Wenzel started; the blood rushed to his cheeks.

"Herr Frobel!" was all he could say.

"Let me finish first!" said Frobel with a smile. "I will pay you higher wages than you had as foreman, and to spur you on will give you a certain share in the profits."

Wenzel stood there motionless; his breast seemed too full for utterance. At length he seized Frobel's hand in passionate excitement.

"I have no words with which to thank you, but I shall by my deeds prove to you, that I shall never—never forget what you have done for me."

"Keep to that," said the manufacturer. "But one thing I must say to you, for you are coming into closer relations with me, and mutual candor is our first duty. What I am doing is not alone for your sake but for your wife's, that she may have a happier life. Therefore, never forget how much you owe your wife. Always listen to her voice, for her sight is clear, and you will find no one who is more honest with you. Now go home—and tell your wife the news; she knows nothing of it as yet."

Wenzel hastened away. Joyfully he rushed into the room, on reaching home; he clasped his wife in his arms and kissed her passionately.

"To you do I owe this good fortune!" cried Wenzel. "Frobel told me that he did this for me for your sake! You shall have a happier life, and I will see that your wishes are fulfilled."

Johanna trembled with joyful excitement.

"Karl," said she," let us at this hour determine to

prove ourselves worthy of the good fortune bestowed upon us."

"I will thank Frobel by deeds!" cried Wenzel. "I have promised him and myself that."

XXIII.

Wenzel's removal to L. was deferred until after Gerhard's marriage, for Ina could not spare her friend on her wedding-day, and Frobel wanted to accompany Wenzel to L.

It was a happy morning on which they left the city. As Johanna sat by the carriage-window, Frobel laid his hand upon her arm and said:

"Now, bid farewell to all sad memories. She who enters upon a new life, must take with her a heart filled with new hopes."

They soon reached B., where they had to change cars, the train awaited them. The porter who opened the door for them, told them they had not a minute to lose.

Hastily they proceeded toward the other train.

"Quick—quick!" cried another porter, opening the door.

Johanna was in advance of the rest. Without looking up, she proceeded to within a few paces of the porter, when she raised her eyes and drew back in surprise.

"What ails you?" asked Wenzel, but he too started when he saw the porter who turned away his head.

Johanna, Wenzel and Frobel entered the carriage; the doors were closed and the train moved on.

She could only take Fröbel's hand and press it to her lips.—Page 263.

Wenzel looked at his wife.

"Did you recognize the man?" he asked.

Johanna nodded. The porter was no less a personage than Lieutenant Rudolph von Brankow.

Brankow had by his frivolity been led into deeds which caused his dismissal from the service. Without means and without capabilities, he had been forced to take the position of a porter.

The sadness which possessed all three only disappeared when they reached L., and Frobel led them to the new factory, adjoining which was a pretty cottage in the midst of a garden.

"Do you like your house?" asked Frobel.

Johanna stood by, speechless; she could only take Frobel's hand and press it to her lips.

"You are doing too much—too much for us!" cried Wenzel with emotion.

* * * * * *

The romance is ended.

We have only to add that the new factory at L. prospered, for Wenzel did all in his power to repay Frobel's confidence in him.

Johanna made the tiny house neat and cozy, and she and Wenzel were so happy that they would not exchange with any one.

Frobel came more frequently to L. than he had intended to. At home his place was filled by Gerhard. He was much happier than formerly, for Gerhard had changed for the better, and Engeline's husband supported her.

"Well, have not your men attempted to strike yet?" he often asked Wenzel in jest.

"No," was the gay reply. "It would do them little good. I would tell them how badly it resulted for me; and, moreover, I learned from you how one can maintain one's rights. Now too—now I listen to my wife's advice."

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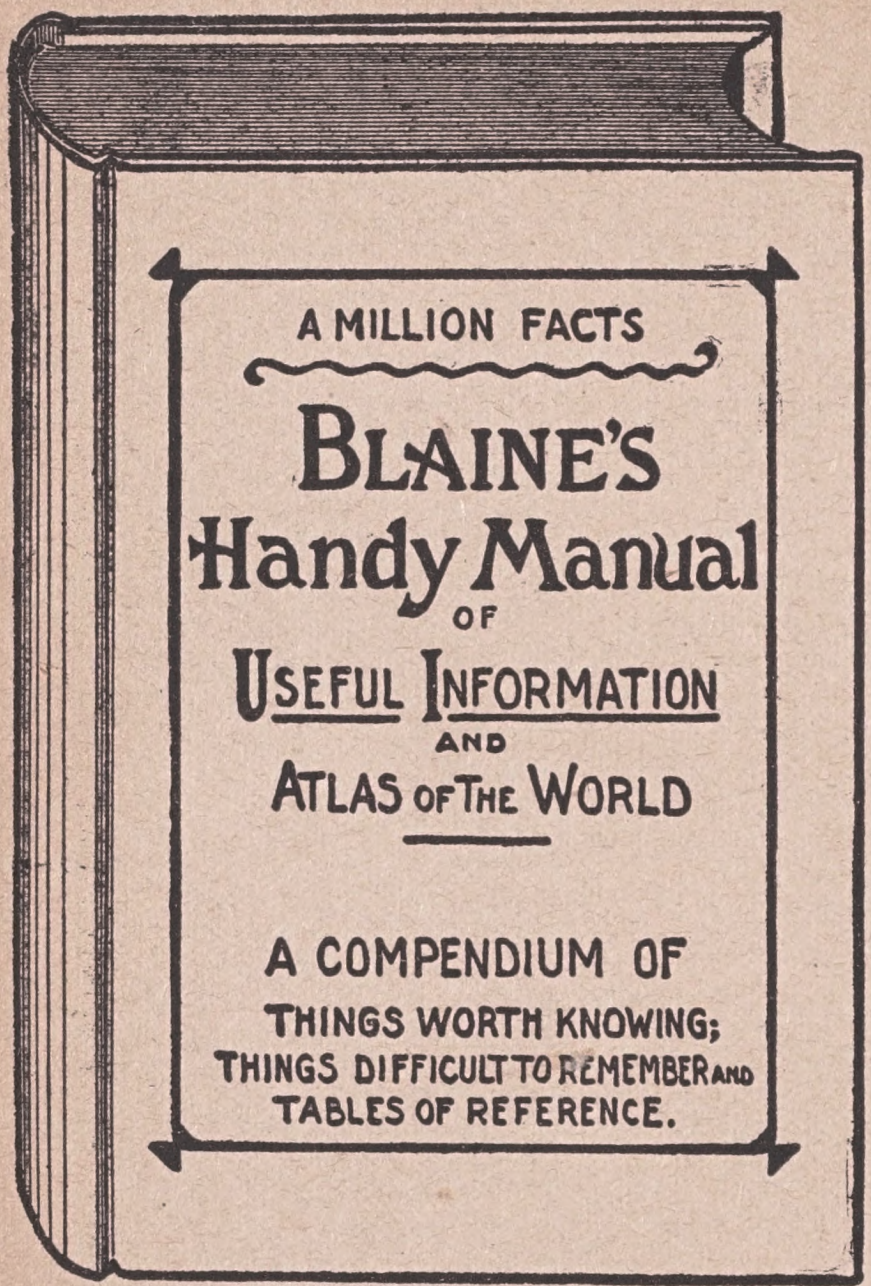

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